

**THE CAXTON EDITION OF  
THE COMPLETE WORKS OF  
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

WITH ANNOTATIONS AND  
A GENERAL INTRODUCTION  
BY SIDNEY LEE

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VOLUME XIX

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CORIOLANUS  
SONNETS



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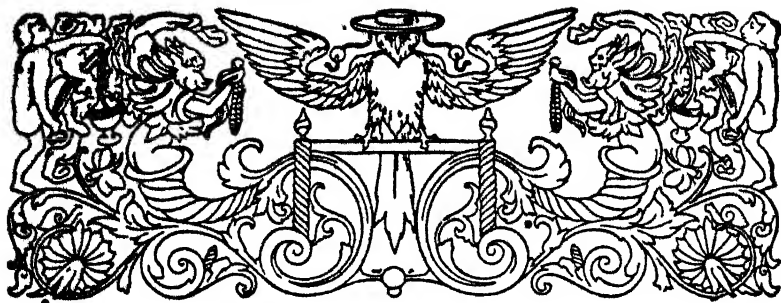
# **CORIO LANUS**



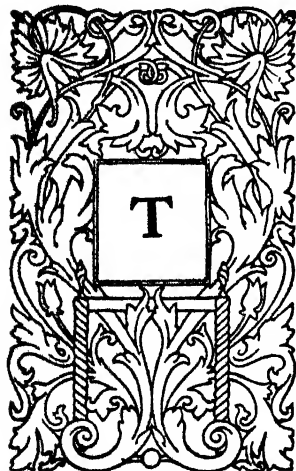
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## INTRODUCTION



HERE is no external evidence as to the date of the composition of Shakespeare's tragedy of "Coriolanus." It was printed for the first time in the First Folio of 1623, and there is no earlier mention of the piece. In the First Folio the play holds the second place in the section of tragedies, following "Troilus and Cressida," and being succeeded by "Titus Andronicus." The Folio text is exceptionally corrupt. The "copy" was obviously ill-written, although from the fulness of the stage direction, it may be inferred that it was a transcript which belonged to the theatrical manager. Despite the efforts of textual critics, several passages remain barely intelligible.



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Internal evidence points with no uncertain finger to the late months of 1608 or early months of 1609 as the period of the play's birth.<sup>1</sup> The tragedy forms with "Julius Cæsar" and "Antony and Cleopatra" a virtual trilogy which is based in its main features on Plutarch's biographical narratives of Roman history. Although Coriolanus' career belongs to a far earlier period, of history than either of the two companion pieces, there is reason to believe that it was undertaken last. The irregularities of metre, the ellipses of style, closely associate it with "Antony and Cleopatra" and separate it by a wide interval from "Julius Cæsar." But alike in prosody and verbal construction Coriolanus seems to accentuate the peculiarities of "Antony and Cleopatra," and encourage the inference that it followed rather than preceded that great tragedy of passion. Statistics show

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Jonson's "Silent Woman," which is known to have been first acted in 1609, seems to echo a phrase of Shakespeare's play. In II, ii, 105 Cominius says of the hero's feats in youth that "he lurch'd [*i. e.*, deprived] all swords of the garland." The phrase has an uncommon ring and it would be in full accordance with Jonson's habit to have assimilated it, when he penned the sentence, "Well, Dauphin, you have *lurched* your friends of the better half of the garland" ("Silent Woman," V, iv, 227-228). It is difficult to take seriously the suggestion that 1612 must be the date of composition because in a new edition, first published in that year, of North's translation of Plutarch's "Lives," a passage which had previously read "How more *unfortunately* than all living women" was altered to "How more *unfortunate* than all living women," in which shape the line figures in Shakespeare's play (V, iii, 97). It is fatuous to deny Shakespeare the power of making for himself (without recourse to the 1612 edition of North) a correction which metrical exigencies made almost imperative.

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that weak or unaccented syllables, the presence of which at the end of lines marks for the most part a new departure in "Antony and Cleopatra," are perceptibly greater in "Coriolanus."<sup>1</sup> A similar ratio of increase may be assigned to the syntactical ellipses and harsh contractions of language. It cannot be asserted that the dramatist's thought flows through "Coriolanus" with any such distinctive acceleration of pace as positively to indicate a precise sequence in workmanship. Rather the flashing intellectual vigour gives in "Coriolanus" new signs of restraint, but the development of control may well mark a stage of advance in the flood of inspiration.

The sharp contrast, too, between the subject-matter of "Antony and Cleopatra," and that of "Coriolanus," points plainly to some intervening space of time in the composition of the two plays, and suggests that "Coriolanus" is the later of the two. The simple austerity of Coriolanus' tragic career is the ethical antithesis of the passionate subtlety of the story of Antony and his mistress. Turbulent as are the emotional storms which overwhelm Coriolanus, they break in an atmosphere of sombre clarity, out of which the voluptuous fire may well have lately died.

The imagery, which reflects the sterner sentiment, confirms the impression that the tide of emotional impulse is just on the ebb. The metaphors and similes of "Coriolanus" are hardly less abundant than in "Antony and Cleopatra" and no less vivid. But,

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<sup>1</sup> The percentage of weak and unaccented syllables is reckoned at 3.58 in "Antony and Cleopatra," and at 4.3 in "Coriolanus."

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save in the final crisis, they lack the lyric warmth of colour which characterises the former piece. Their vitality is often due to their unromantic homeliness; they are at times impressive from an almost prosaic directness. Coriolanus' wounds are compared to "graves i' the holy churchyard" (III, iii, 51). He conquers like the osprey who takes the fish "by sovereignty of nature" (IV, vii, 35). There is no more pity in him than "milk in a male tiger" (V, iv, 28). Soldiers follow him

"with no less confidence  
Than boys pursuing summer butterflies  
Or butchers killing flies." (IV, vi, 94-96.)

In his most impassioned moods the hero develops a noble grandeur of figurative utterance. But, in spite of its dignity and its magnificent range, it still savours for the most part of a sculpturesque, albeit colossal severity. He goes into solitary banishment "like to a lonely dragon" (IV, i, 30). His mother on her knees at his feet is "Olympus nodding in supplication to a molehill" (V, iii, 30). His emotions, strained almost to breaking point by Volumnia's appeal, make it difficult for him to believe the sight of her prostration, and his incredulity carries him involuntarily beyond the limits of earth to celestial altitudes:

"Then let the pebbles on the hungry beach  
Fillip the stars; then let the mutinous winds  
Strike the proud cedars 'gainst the fiery sun."  
(V, iii, 58-60.)

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But such outbursts are rare. In his penultimate utterance he resumes the more normal and more mundane strain, and meets death with the glorious boast

“That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I  
Flutter’d your Volscians in Corioli;  
Alone I did it.” (V, vi, 115–117.)

Lyric digression is outside the scope of the play, and the lyric glow which fires the emotional speech of “Antony and Cleopatra” is exchanged for the chastened heat of classic sublimity.

## II

In a sense Shakespeare showed a bolder spirit of innovation in dramatising Coriolanus’ history than in adapting to dramatic purpose the Roman themes of Julius Cæsar and Antony and Cleopatra. Long before he worked on those two topics, both were familiar not merely to the stage in England, but to the theatres of France and Italy. Before Shakespeare wrote “Julius Cæsar” and “Antony and Cleopatra” the dramatic literature of Europe was rich in plays on the same heroes and heroine. “Coriolanus” stands on a different footing. As far as is known, only one dramatist in Europe anticipated Shakespeare in turning Coriolanus’ fate to dramatic purposes. Shakespeare’s single predecessor was the Frenchman, Alexandre Hardy, whose tragedy of “Coriolan” was produced on the Parisian stage for the first time as late as 1607.

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Hardy was a voluminous and popular playwright, who had, like Shakespeare, begun his career as an actor. Although he interpreted Senecan principles of dramatic art with freedom, he respected the classical temper and most of the classical canons. In the case of "Coriolan" he observed the unity of action by opening the scene with the banishment of the hero and by strictly confining the succeeding episode to the events issuing in his death. The monologues of Coriolanus and Volumnia fill most of Hardy's pages, and the chorus of Roman citizens hardly relieves the monotonous effect. Hardy never rises to the level of tragic passion, but his fluent pen always had at command an ample store of stilted dignity. In France his experiment struck root. He himself declared that "few subjects will be found in Roman history to be worthier of the stage" than Coriolanus. The simplicity of the tragic motive with its filial sentiment well harmonised with French ideals of classical drama and with the French domestic temperament. For more than two centuries the seed which Hardy had sown fructified, and no less than three and twenty tragedies on the subject blossomed since Hardy's day in the French theatres.<sup>1</sup> The later French dramatists liberally revised the simple plot, and greatly developed the female interest. Coriolanus' wife in

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<sup>1</sup> The best known of the French dramatic authors who followed Hardy's example in writing plays on the subject of "Coriolanus," are Urbain Chevreau, 1638, Gaspard Abeille, 1676, Jean François de la Harpe, 1784. See "Alexandre Hardy et le théâtre Français . . . par Eugène Rigal," Paris, 1889 (pp. 326-335).

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some of the French tragedies acquires a prominence almost equal to that of her husband or her mother-in-law, and at times her influence is shared or disputed by the hero's mistress or daughter or sister. But despite the occasional complications of later French ingenuity, it is the singleness of interest attaching to Coriolanus' relation with his mother which chiefly sustained the *tragic fable in the stream of French drama*.

*It may be no more than a fortuitous coincidence that Shakespeare took up the dramatic parable just after its first enunciation in Paris; yet it is difficult to deny the possibility that some mysterious affinity or influence drew his attention, almost contemporaneously with the French playwright Hardy, to a dramatic theme whose main characteristic was a severe classical simplicity. At first sight the topic seemed to offer few opportunities or attractions to a dramatist whose immediately preceding and succeeding achievement evinced a predominant sympathy with stories instinct with emotional subtlety and romantic temper. Whether or no Shakespeare knew aught of Hardy's experiment, his triumphant treatment in the plenitude of his strength, of a statuesque classical episode (without substantial variation of its tenour) is a striking testimony to the versatility of his genius.*

### III

The story of "Coriolanus" belongs to a cloudy epoch of Roman history. The incident is to some extent a legendary growth, and no archæologist has yet identi-

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fied for certain the site of Corioli, the town in which an important part of the tale centres. But the main episode doubtless rests on secure foundations, and may be confidently assigned to the early years of the fifth century B. C., when the Roman Republic was in its infancy. In point of historic chronology, Shakespeare's tragedy is most closely linked, within the range of his work, to his second narrative poem of "Lucrece," which belongs to the first stage of his literary career. Coriolanus in youth had taken part in that forcible expulsion of Tarquin, the last of the Roman kings, which his son's rape of Lucrece precipitated. It is said in the play of Coriolanus' boyhood that "Tarquin's self he met, And struck him on his knee" (II, ii, 92-93). The fables of Lucrece and Coriolanus have, too, the same literary parentage. Both were first recorded by the Roman historian Livy, in the first century B. C., and no earlier source seems known. But the parts played by the two tales in literature of Europe differed vastly. The wrong which Lucrece suffered at Tarquin's hand passed into the folklore and poetry of all the modern western world. Coriolanus' fate enjoyed a far more restricted fame. But it is worth noting that in Elizabethan England, Livy's version of the two stories was first offered in a literal English rendering to the reading public in one and the same volume — the collection of tales known as Painter's "Palace of Pleasure," 1566. There Englishmen, who knew no language but their own, first learned Coriolanus' story. Lucrece was already more or less naturalised among them as

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a poetic heroine of the three mediæval poets, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, but Painter first narrated her fortune in plain English prose.

Livy's account of Coriolanus enjoyed the rare advantage of attracting the notice of the Greek biographer, Plutarch, and was by him greatly amplified and dignified. Wherever Plutarch's "Lives" penetrated, Coriolanus consequently enjoyed a distinctive repute which his presence in Livy's crowded annals could not offer him. Although there is evidence that Shakespeare was well acquainted with Painter's "Palace of Pleasure," there can be no doubt that the "Life of Coriolanus" in North's translation of Plutarch (1579), first revealed to him the dramatic possibilities of the theme. To the translator North the dramatist owed not merely the details of his play but many hints for his characterisation and phraseology.

Plutarch's "Life of Coriolanus" bears to Shakespeare's tragedy much the same relation as Plutarch's lives of Cæsar and Brutus bear to the dramatist's "Julius Cæsar" or Plutarch's "Life of Mark Antony" to his "Antony and Cleopatra." From its brevity and homogeneity, however, Plutarch's memoir of Coriolanus offered easier material to the dramatist than the classical biographies with which he had already dealt. The facts were far fewer and fell within a narrower compass of place and time. The events in Coriolanus' life, to which Plutarch confined his attention, only occupied some three years (493-490 B.C.), and run a simple and straightforward course. There was no need for Shake-



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speare to omit any large tract of his hero's activity as in the case of the Eastern wars of Antony. Nor was there any inducement to expand or complicate the fable by drawing on complementary biographies, as in the case of "Julius Cæsar." Coriolanus is an isolated figure in Plutarch's gallery, and his career claimed the dramatist's undivided energy. In the result, Shakespeare's story presents Plutarch's main facts with almost documentary accuracy. He amplifies some subsidiary details and omits or contracts others. He is less expansive than his authority in describing the causes and progress of the plebeians' hostility to the patricians. Elsewhere he refashions a subsidiary historic personality. Volumnia, Coriolanus' mother, is recreated by him on a scale outside Plutarch's range. He gives an original interpretation of the character of Menenius Agrippa. Again Coriolanus' fiery comment on his sentence of banishment, "You common cry of curs," is practically Shakespeare's invention. Although Plutarch credits the hero in the like situation with "vehemency of anger and desire of revenge" he represents his utterance as silenced by the outcries of the mob. The personality, however, of Coriolanus, with his acts, his speeches, and the comments passed upon him by friends or foes, embody as a rule Plutarch's suggestion with an astonishing fidelity.

Probably the number of words and phrases which Shakespeare transfers to the play, substantially unaltered, from North's translation of Plutarch, exceeds his verbatim borrowings in "Antony and Cleopatra," and is

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undoubtedly twice as great as those in "Julius Cæsar." The longest speeches in the play are the hero's address to the Volscian general, Aufidius, when he offers him his military services, and Volumnia's great appeal to her son to rescue his fellow countrymen from the perils to which his desertion is exposing them; both these impressive deliverances transcribe with small variation for two-thirds of their length Plutarch's language. There is magical vigour in the original interpolations. But the identity of phraseology is almost as striking as the changes or amplifications. In Plutarch, Coriolanus' first words to Aufidius in his own house run: "If thou knowest me not yet, Tullus, and, seeing me, dost not believe me to be the man that I am indeed, I must of necessity betray myself to be that I am." In Shakespeare Coriolanus speaks on the same occasion thus:

"If, Tullus,  
Not yet thou knowest me, and, seeing me, dost not  
Think me for the man I am, necessity  
Commands me name myself." (IV, v, 54-57.)

In Plutarch the speaker continues: "I am Caius Martius, who hath done to thyself particularly, and to all the Volscians generally, great hurt and mischief, which I cannot deny for my surname of Coriolanus that I bear. For I never had other benefit nor recompense of the true and painful service I have done, and the extreme dangers I have been in, but this only surname: a good memory and witness of the malice and dis-

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pleasure thou shouldest bear me." Coriolanus' utterance concludes in the Greek biography with these words: "And if it be so that thou dare not [accept my services] and that thou art weary to prove fortune any more, then am I also weary to live any longer. And it were no wisdom in thee, to save the life of him, who hath been heretofore thy mortal enemy, and whose service now can nothing help nor pleasure thee."

The corresponding passages in Shakespeare run :

My name is Caius Marcius, who hath done  
To thee particularly, and to all the Volscs,  
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may  
My surname, Coriolanus: the painful service,  
The extreme dangers, and the drops of blood  
Shed for my thankless country, are requited  
But with that surname; a good memory,  
And witness of the malice and displeasure  
Which thou shouldst bear me. . . . But if so be  
Thou darest not this and that to prove more fortunes  
Thou'rt tired, then, in a word, I also am  
Longer to live most weary, and present  
My throat to thee and to thy ancient malice;  
Which not to cut would show thee but a fool,  
Since I have ever follow'd thee with hate,  
Drawn tuns of blood out of thy country's breast,  
And cannot live but to thy shame, unless  
It be to do thee service. (IV, v, 65-101.)

Volumnia's speech offers identical illustration of Shakespeare's dependence, though by some subtle changes he invests Plutarch's words with a dramatic

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eloquence and dignity which are only once, — and then by Shakespeare himself — surpassed in the range of literature. The relation of Shakespeare's and Plutarch's speeches may be fitly gauged by one example. Plutarch assigns to Volumnia this sentence: .

“So though the end of war be uncertain, yet this, notwithstanding, is most certain that if it be thy chance to conquer, this benefit shalt thou reap of this thy goodly conquest to be chronicled the plague and destroyer of thy country.”

Shakespeare transliterates with a rare dramatic effect (V, iii, 140–148):

“Thou know'st, great son,  
The end of war's uncertain, but this certain,  
That if thou conquer Rome, the benefit  
Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name  
Whose repetition will be dogg'd with curses;  
Whose chronicle thus writ: 'The man was noble,  
But with his last attempt he wiped it out,  
Destroy'd his country, and his name remains  
To the ensuing age abhorr'd.' ”

Like examples of Shakespeare's method of assimilation might be quoted from Coriolanus' heated speeches to the tribunes and his censures of democracy (Act III, Sc. I). The account which the tribune Brutus gives of Coriolanus' ancestry (II, iii, 234 *seq.*) is so literally paraphrased from Plutarch that an obvious hiatus in the corrupt text of the play, which the syntax requires to be filled, is easily supplied from North's page. (See II, iii, 240, and note.)

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It is otiose to multiply instances. But it may be worth while to note Shakespeare's method of adapting to his dramatic purpose a slight illustrative anecdote of Plutarch. The only reward that Coriolanus claims from his fellow countrymen for his first triumph over the Volscians is the rescue of a humble Volscian benefactor from peril. His request is couched by Plutarch in these terms: "Only this grace (he said) I crave and beseech you to grant me. . . . Among the Volscies there is an old friend and host of mine . . . who . . . liveth now a poor prisoner in the hands of his enemies, and yet notwithstanding all this his misery and misfortune, it would do me great pleasure if I could save him from this one danger, to keep him from being sold as a slave." Shakespeare's dramatic instinct translated these sentences into this speech (I, ix, 82 *seq.*):

I sometime lay here in Corioli  
At a poor man's house; he used me kindly:  
He cried to me; I saw him prisoner;  
But then Aufidius was within my view,  
And wrath o'erwhelm'd my pity: I request you  
To give my poor host freedom."

The dramatist's indebtedness to Coriolanus' Greek biographer cannot be ignored. Yet when all allowance is made for his liberal loans, he is seen to have transmuted almost all that he has borrowed, and to have breathed into the biographic narrative a dramatic spirit which gives it a new significance and vivacity. The dramatic construction of the play has defects. Some

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of Plutarch's raw material offers stubborn resistance to dramatic method. Shakespeare was either too conscientious or too careless to cut all the unmanageable elements adrift. The battle scenes in the earlier part of the play with the combatants' hurried entries and exits present a somewhat confusing series of alarums and excursions. The central episode of the play, too, — Coriolanus' candidature for the consulship with his persistent if reluctant solicitation of the citizens' "voices" (*i. e.*, votes) — presumes for its full effect an unusual familiarity with obsolete electoral customs of the Roman Republic. The flow of dramatic interest is consequently retarded. But the intense vigour which vivifies Shakespeare's conception of the leading characters quickly overcomes all obstacles. As soon as the reader and spectator come face to face with the hero and his mother, occasional faltering in the dramatic movement counts for little or nothing. The main current runs irresistibly. The utterances of Coriolanus and Volumnia steadily gain, moreover, in power and spaciousness with the progress of the tragedy. The swelling note sounded in Coriolanus' furious imprecation on the city of his birth (with its magical closing cadence, "There is a world elsewhere") fitly preludes the rousing eloquence of Volumnia's valediction and culminates in her son's touching epilogue of surrender and piercing death-cry. The unity of interest and the singleness of the dramatic purpose renders the tragedy nearly as complete a triumph of dramatic art as "Othello."

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## IV

The tragedy owes its greatness to the insight and fire which permeate the two chief characters, Coriolanus and Volumnia. Of the subordinate personages Menenius Agrippa best rewards critical study. Aufidius, who fills a prominent place in the action, is a comparatively slight sketch. More interesting are the tribunes and the spokesmen of the mob; they interpret the dominant motives of the democratic agitation, which overthrows the hero.

The keynote of Coriolanus' character is struck by Plutarch: "This man also is a good proof to confirm some men's opinions: That a rare and excellent wit, untaught, doth bring forth many good and evil things together; as a fat soil that lieth unmanured bringeth forth both herbs and weeds. For this Martius' natural wit and great heart did marvellously stir up his courage to do and attempt notable acts. But on the other side, for lack of education, he was so choleric and impatient, that he would yield to no living creature: which made him churlish, uncivil, and altogether unfit for any man's conversation. Yet men marvelling much at his constancy, that he was never overcome with pleasure nor money, and how he would endure easily all manner of pains and travails: thereupon they well liked and commended his stoutness and temperancy. But for all that they could not be acquainted with him, as one citizen useth to be with another in the city: his behaviour was so unpleasant

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to them by reason of a certain insolent and stern manner he had, which, because he was too lordly, was disliked." Elsewhere Plutarch calls Coriolanus "a stout man of nature, full of passion and choler, who lacked the gravity and affability and judgment that is gotten with learning and reason." It was on such foundations that Shakespeare built. But Shakespeare's dramatic portrait is of a heroic grandeur, which is very dimly discernible in Plutarch's elaborate sketch.

Shakespeare's Coriolanus is cast in a Titanic mould. His deeds "should not be uttered feebly." All his characteristics are of superb dimensions. A born soldier, he is in mere brute strength a giant who can turn a man about with his finger and his thumb as one would set a top spinning. He has the courage of a lion and is as stubborn. His voice is always pitched in the same thunderous and masterful key. He knows nothing of "the soft way," nothing of mildness. He is "ill-schooled in bolted language." It is impossible for him "to practice the insinuating nod." His manner in peace has the austerity befitting a time of war. The unflinching pride, which is his ruling passion, is a "soaring insolence," which defies all conditions of practical prudence. No turn in the wheel of fortune can modify that colossal sense of the sacredness of caste with which his mother's milk has infected him. Men engaged in trade or manual labour are for him an inferior race, of a closer affinity to the beasts of the field than to his own hereditary rank. They are curs, rats, hares, geese. Their "stinking



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breaths" and "greasy caps" render equal intercourse with them unthinkable. He cannot tolerate their unwashed hands and unbrushed teeth. He speaks of the people as if he were "a god to punish, not a man of their infirmity" (III, i, 81-82). The spirit of fraternity which graces the soldiership of Shakespeare's favoured hero, Henry V, is to the haughty temper of Coriolanus an undignified weakness. Scathing scorn for the "beastly" rabble — of the apron-men and the mechanics — is for him an altitude of virtue.

Yet Coriolanus' pride of caste and stubborn temper are allied to a robust and severe integrity. His magnificent egoism suggests intellectual rather than moral failing. His brain lacks pliancy, and cannot modulate its workings. No sense of humour modifies his thought. Yet he has virtues of characteristic amplitude and solidity. No sensual blemish is visible in his sturdy nature. He is incapable of petty jealousy of his colleagues. He readily serves in a subordinate capacity on the battle-field. He repudiates with convincing emphasis any suspicion of covetousness. He cannot make his heart consent to take a bribe to pay his sword. Praise is distasteful to him even from his mother. His wounds smart to hear themselves remembered. He had rather venture all his limbs to honour than one of his ears to hear it. He loathes exaggeration of his achievements. He cannot idly sit to hear his nothings monstered. There is an inevitable aggressiveness about his protestations of modesty, but their sincerity is unquestionable.

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The intense manliness of his temperament provokes among his associates an admiration, even an affection, which, within the bounds of his own class, he austere reciprocates. His fellow officers reverence him as "the flower of warriors." The veteran Menenius cherishes for him a parental affection, which excites in his heart a filial echo. Men of his own rank readily find dignified excuses for his exorbitant arrogance and his frank incapacity for compromise:

"His nature is too noble for the world:  
He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,  
Or Jove for 's power to thunder. His heart 's his mouth:  
What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent;  
And, being angry, does forget that ever  
He heard the name of death." (III, i, 255-260.)

But Coriolanus' bearing to his friends and fellow officers scarcely supplies the humanising touch which is necessary to any genuine sympathy with his fortunes. The leavening current flows in its fulness from his relations with his family. His patrician pride is the fruit of heredity. It is his mother's gift, and to her he is bound by ties of affection as great in intensity as the less amiable traits of his character. It is the conflict between his strong filial sentiment and his obstinate antipathy to the democracy which induces sympathy with his fate and lends his story its needful dramatic point. The pivot of Coriolanus' tragedy is the psychological struggle between the inflexible aristocratic sentiment which governs his public life, and his sense of domestic obligation which is jeopardised by his public action.

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Coriolanus' loving regard for his mother, Volumnia, is linked with considerate gentleness of bearing towards his gracious, silent wife, Virgilia, and with manly solicitude for their young son. A chivalric sentiment marks, too, his attitude to his wife's confidante, Valeria. The distress which he causes his wife moves him to his sole outburst of lyric emotion :

"Best of my flesh,  
Forgive my tyranny; but do not say,  
For that 'Forgive our Romans.' O, a kiss  
Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!  
Now, by the jealous queen of heaven, that kiss  
I carried from thee, dear, and my true lip  
Hath virgin'd it e'er since." (V, iii, 42-48.)

A genuine paternal tenderness inspires his brief address to his son whose thoughts he prays the god of soldiers to inform with nobleness :

"that thou mayst prove  
To shame invulnerable, and stick i' the wars  
Like a great sea-mark, standing every flaw  
And saving those that eye thee!" (V, iii, 72-75.)

Coriolanus' fall comes from his misapprehension of the relative force of his private affections and of his public or political prejudices. In the crisis of his fate, when the two influences are in direct conflict, his political pride wins the first victory. It masters every opposing sentiment. He severs the domestic as well as the patriotic tie. He will not be a gosling and obey instinct. He joins the ranks of his country's foes, and threatens

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his countrymen, including his kindred, with fire and sword. But the domestic sentiment, which he has suppressed, is not extinguished. At a breath it revives to challenge to a fresh encounter his political convictions, and in the end it scores a sweeping triumph. But the toils of fate, which Coriolanus' stubborn and self-reliant egoism have already woven about him, leave him at the close of the spiritual conflict no genuine loophole of escape. His reawakened filial piety, which reunites him to his family and to his countrymen, is not to be reconciled with the political obligations in which his haughty spirit has involved him with his country's enemies. He is murdered as a traitor by the Volscians, whom he had joined in order to avenge on his native city the outrage which her democratic leaders had done his patrician pride.

Coriolanus' mother, Volumnia, is as vivid and finished a picture as the hero himself. Her portrait, indeed, is a greater original effort, for it owes much less to Plutarch's inspiration. Volumnia is a proud, high-souled, strong-willed, shrewd-witted matron, amply endowed with maternal feeling. From her Coriolanus derives alike his patrician prejudice and his military ambition. She has firm faith in hereditary rank and birth. Trade or manual labour is in her view degrading. The common people are "woollen vassals, things created to buy and sell with groats, to show bare heads in congregation, to yawn, to be still and wonder (in presence of the upper classes)." When her son suffers sentence of banishment from plebeian lips, her

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resentment finds characteristic expression in the imprecation "Now the red pestilence strike all trades in Rome And occupations perish." Military glory colours her conception of manly virtue, and she values it highest in her own kindred. She inured her son, her only child, in boyhood to hardy soldiership. With justice she tells him, "My praises made thee first a soldier; Thy valiantness is mine; thou suck'dst it from me." She rejoices in the wounds with which in manhood he returns from battle. "She (poor hen!) fond of no second brood cluck'd him to the wars, and safely home, loaden with honour." There is no hesitation about her admiration of his prowess. He is to other Roman citizens "like the Capitol to the meanest house" in the city. Though Coriolanus is impatient of his mother's spoken praises, he rejoices in her approval, and there is some foundation for the citizens' taunt that he performs his military exploits "to please his mother." Her courage, too, is no wit inferior to his. She mocks at death with as big a heart as he.

But in one regard Volumnia is greater than her stubborn heir. The keenness and pliancy of her intellect have no counterpart in his nature. In spite of the warmth of her affection, she is fully alive to his defects of reason, on which she comments with a mother's frankness and a worldly philosopher's penetrating irony. These are some of the biting rebukes she addresses to him:

"You might have been enough the man you are,  
With striving less to be so." (III, ii, 19-20.)

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“I have a heart as little apt as yours,  
But yet a brain that leads my use of anger  
To better vantage.” (III, ii, 29-31.)

“I would dissemble with my nature, where  
My fortunes and my friends at stake required  
I should do so in honour.” (III, ii, 62-64.)

There is no narrowness, no pettiness, in Volumnia's moral or mental constitution. Misfortune increases her moral and mental stature. There is no faint puling about her griefs. In anger she is Juno-like. When adversity compels her to present herself to her son in a foreign camp as a suppliant in behalf of the Roman people, her words acquire a logical cogency and rhetorical splendour which entitles her eloquence, for all its debt to Plutarch, to rank with Mark Antony's oration at Cæsar's funeral. Her tongue is innocent of the garrulity of age. She knows the season of silence no less than that of speech, and it is dramatically fitting that after the eloquent appeal to her son, whereby she saves Rome and with unconscious irony seals his ruin, no further word in the scenes that follow should escape her lips.

Very artistically are the other female characters of the tragedy, Coriolanus' wife, Virgilia, and Virgilia's friend, Valeria, presented as Volumnia's foils. Valeria is a high-spirited and honourable lady of fashion, with a predilection for frivolous pleasure, and easy gossip. Virgilia is a gentle wife and mother, who fully deserves Coriolanus' apostrophe of “gracious silence.” She speaks little, and

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her husband's military adventures only excite her fears for his personal safety. She greets with tears his return home in triumph, whereby she earns the scorn of her brave and resolute mother-in-law. The three characters amply testify to the dramatist's knowledge of the varieties of the female temper.

Of other subsidiary characters, Menenius Agrippa, Coriolanus' old friend and counsellor, is a touching portrait of fidelity. He is for the most part Shakespeare's own creation. Plutarch merely reckons him "the most acceptable to the people" among "certain of the pleasantest old men in the senate." Shakespeare follows Plutarch in assigning to Menenius "many good persuasions and gentle requests made to the people on the behalf of the senate," and puts in his mouth the "notable tale" of the belly's rebellion against the members of the human body. But Menenius disappears from Plutarch's page as soon as he has drawn his moral from this apologue. He retires as soon as he has proved in parable that the senate is to the body politic what the belly is to the human frame. Shakespeare prolongs Menenius' history to the end of the piece. Throughout the tragedy he is a level-headed observer of events. He criticises their progress with ironical detachment after the manner of a chorus in classical tragedy. His place in the dramatic scheme resembles that of Enobarbus in "Antony and Cleopatra," and the turn of events involves him in almost as melancholy a fate. He is no bitter partisan, and although associated with the patricians has the reputation of loving the people. He jests

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as complacently at what he conceives to be his own failings as at those which he detects in others. His ironical wit sharpens the zest of his sagacious comments until the cruel catastrophe of Coriolanus' repudiation. Then his spirit breaks and despair overwhelms him. There is no more pathetic episode in the tragedy than Coriolanus' dismissal of him, practically unheard, from the Volscian camp. Not the newly crowned Prince Hal's rejection of his old associate Falstaff inflicts a deeper wound on the reader's or the spectator's heart.

Aufidius, the Volscian general to whom Coriolanus owes his death, is a less satisfactory creation. His character is developed by Shakespeare on lines which Plutarch suggested, and the mingling in him of meanness and liberality lacks complete consistency in either author. At the opening of the play, he figures as a brave soldier, "a lion" whom Coriolanus is "proud to hunt," but the rivalry between the two warriors has generated a personal hatred which evokes a characteristic divergence of expression. It is Coriolanus' highest ambition to meet and kill his hated adversary in a fair personal encounter. Aufidius confesses that he cares not by what device he overcome his enemy, provided only that he get the better of him.

"Mine emulation

Hath not that honour in 't it had; for where  
I thought to crush him in an equal force,  
True sword to sword, I'll potch at him some way,  
Or wrath or craft may get him." (I, x, 12-16.)

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In the later scenes circumstances drive *Coriolanus* to offer his sword to his arch foe, who at first exults magnanimously in the alliance. But only momentarily does Aufidius' spirit soar on noble heights. *Coriolanus*' haughty temper combines with his superior prowess in the field to re-awaken his old rival's malignity even as they fight side by side. He affects sympathy with *Coriolanus*' spiritual suffering when his mother stirs his filial love in the Volscian camp. But virtuous sensations in the Volscian general are fleeting and delusive. He is easily led to suspect *Coriolanus*' loyalty in the negotiations with Rome which follow *Volumnia*'s petition for peace, and he plots *Coriolanus*' death with treacherous decisiveness. As soon, however, as Aufidius has wreaked his vengeance, his better self again gets the upper hand. "My rage is gone, and I am struck with sorrow," he exclaims while giving directions that his enemy shall be worthily commemorated in death. The failings of *Coriolanus*' destroyer are not welded to his virtues with quite sufficient closeness to render him as effective a foil to *Coriolanus* as might be wished.

No less important to the dramatic development of the story are the spokesmen of the mob and their leaders, the tribunes *Brutus* and *Sicinius*. These representatives of the popular faction, with whom *Coriolanus* has no bond of sympathy, are the primary instruments of his ruin, and the contrast between their natures and the character of the hero is drawn in high relief. The demagogues are corrupt and cowardly bullies, and the rabble whom they dupe, although it has some brighter

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*aspects, is mainly characterised by fickleness and glib ignorance.*

The dark colours in which Shakespeare paints the popular faction is often held to reflect a personal predilection for aristocratic predominance in a state or for feudal conditions of political society. Some critics even detect in his harsh presentation of the tribunes and of their poverty-stricken supporters not only antipathy to popular liberty, but a dishonouring worship of wealth. It is, however, very doubtful whether Shakespeare in his portrayal of the Roman crowd was conscious of any intention save that of dramatically interpreting the social and political environment which Plutarch allots to Coriolanus' career. The Greek biographer presents the plebeian party in no amiable light. "Cruel" and "seditious" are the epithets which he applies to the tribunes, and the people are in his pages contemptibly responsive to their leaders' unblushing flatteries. The persistent struggle between democracy and oligarchy, which early Roman history illustrated, had no precise counterpart in Tudor England. No Elizabethan challenged the monarchical principle of government, and the monarchical sentiment permitted no precise local application of a tale of rivalry between the claims to political supremacy of privileged oligarchy and of organised democracy. The political situation which Plutarch described was alien to the experience of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. It could hardly present itself to them as a matter of personal concern, or appeal to their private prejudices. Shakespeare was

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in all probability merely moved by the artistic and purely objective ambition to invest unfamiliar episode with dramatic probability.

Into Plutarch's lively portraits of the tribunes Shakespeare introduced little change. They figure alike in the play and the Greek biography as corrupt, virulent, and short-sighted agitators for mob-rule. But Shakespeare achieved his dramatic purpose by subtly qualifying the character of Plutarch's proletarian mob. He endows the citizens with a rough sense of humour which was wholly new, and he accentuates their innate respect for Coriolanus' valour at which Plutarch merely hints. No personal malice nor political design need be imputed to the dramatist's repeated references to the citizens' "strong breaths" or "greasy caps." Such allusions are constant features of Elizabethan drama. They had not the same significance in Elizabethan as in modern ears, and were more or less conventional aids to merriment in the playhouse.

If any political moral is to be drawn from the play, it can hardly be an unqualified condemnation of democracy. Whatever failings are assigned to the plebeians, it is patrician defiance of the natural instincts of patriotism which brings about the catastrophe, and works the fatal disaster. On the whole, Shakespeare's detached but inveterate sense of justice holds the balance true between the rival interests.

Of the democratic organisation of the state he knew little, and he did not seriously argue in the tragedy for or against it. To "the yea or no of general ignorance"

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he naturally deprecates submission. It was an axiom in the political philosophy of his monarchical age that "gentry" and "title" as well as "wisdom" should weigh heaviest in the political scale. Yet he took no partisan view of human nature in its political relation. He recognised that "the fundamental part" of government was order and discipline. Authority cannot with security be indefinitely distributed among the "multitudinous tongue." He credits Coriolanus with a penetrating diagnosis of the danger of establishing two powers in the state with overlapping functions: "how soon confusion May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take The one by the other" (III, i, 110-112). Where one magistrate disdains the other without cause, and the other insults the one without reason, "nothing is done to purpose" (III, i, 149). Shakespeare is in effect illustrating that universal principle and prudent doctrine of "the specialty of rule," of the indispensability of "degree priority and place," which he had already impressively enunciated in "Troilus and Cressida" and in "Henry V." Coriolanus and the tribunes all fail because each side challenges the elements which are essential to equilibrium in the body-politic. They pay the penalty of denying the salutary law of nature that

"Government, though high and low and lower  
Put into parts, [should] keep in one consent,  
Congreeing in a full and natural close,  
Like music."

Shakespeare's influence inspired some fresh dramatic experiments in England with the story of Coriolanus,

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during the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> But the literary merit reached no high level, and popular interest was languidly excited. Nahum Tate, the persevering adapter of Shakespeare to the taste of the Restoration, built, according to his own account, on the "rock" of Shakespeare's play a clumsy "superstructure," which he entitled "The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth, or, The Fall of Caius Martius." The piece was produced at the Theatre Royal, London, in 1682. The hope of the prologue, that the venture would "turn to money what lay dead before," was not fulfilled. No better fortune attended the like enterprise of the critic John Dennis, whose freer recension of Shakespeare's tragedy under the title of "The Invader of his Country, or the Fatal Resentment" was scornfully driven from the stage at Drury Lane Theatre after three performances in 1719. James Thomson, the poet of "The Seasons," in his latest year of life, 1748, vainly undertook the task of writing a new play on Plutarch's memoir, and his ambition suggested to the inferior pen of Thomas Sheridan, Richard Brinsley Sheridan's father, a tame mosaic, which he fashioned out of both

<sup>1</sup> No country approached France in the hospitality of the reception which her dramatic authors offered Coriolanus' story (see *supra*). But after both Shakespeare and Hardy had passed away, the Spanish dramatist Calderon produced a dramatic fantasia on the theme which is classed among his *Armas de la Hermosura* ("Signs of Beauty"). It is a confused adaptation of Livy's legendary annals of early Rome. Coriolanus is one of Romulus' generals, and his wife Veturia is a ravaged Sabine. Calderon's play seems to stand alone in Spanish literature.

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Shakespeare and Thomson's works. This was produced at Covent Garden Theatre in 1755.

Theatrical interest in the career of "Coriolanus," however, revived at the end of the eighteenth century. This revival was inaugurated by John Philip Kemble in 1789 with an adaptation which borrowed more than was desirable from the desecrating efforts of Thomson and Sheridan. But Kemble in the part of the hero, and his sister Mrs. Siddons in the part of Volumnia, achieved memorable histrionic triumphs. Many contemporary critics reckoned these impersonations of Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, which were frequently repeated, among the most glorious episodes in their great careers. Subsequently Macready introduced into his repertory an authentic version of the tragedy, himself appearing with success as the hero. Phelps at a later date in the nineteenth century presented the tragedy with artistic profit, but with his effort the brief line of great English interpreters of Coriolanus' rôle seems to have for the time failed. In America Edwin Booth, John McCullough, and Lawrence Barrett gave in the next generation dignified renderings of the hero's part. But on the English stage the place which Kemble, Macready, and Phelps assigned to the tragedy has not been sustained. Coriolanus was the last Shakespearean rôle which Sir Henry Irving essayed (1900), and the endeavour proved a failure.

SIDNEY LEE.



# **CORIO LANUS**



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ<sup>1</sup>

CAIUS MARCIUS, afterwards CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

TITUS LARTIUS, }  
COMINIUS, } generals against the Volscians.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA, friend to Coriolanus.

SICINIUS VELUTUS, }  
JUNIUS BRUTUS, } tribunes of the people.

YOUNG MARCIUS, son of Coriolanus.

A Roman Herald.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS, general of the Volscians.

Lieutenant to Aufidius.

Conspirators with Aufidius.

A Citizen of Antium.

Two Volscian Guards.

VOLUMNIA, mother to Coriolanus.

VIRGILIA, wife to Coriolanus.

VALERIA, friend to Virgilia.

Gentlewoman attending on Virgilia.

Roman and Volscian Senators, Patricians, Ædiles, Lictors, Soldiers,  
Citizens, Messengers, Servants to Aufidius, and other Attendants.

SCENE: *Rome and the neighbourhood; Corioli and the neighbourhood; Antium*

<sup>1</sup> The piece was first printed in the First Folio of 1623. The First Act is there headed "Actus Primus. Scæna Prima," but there is no other scenic subdivision. Rowe first supplied a list of the "Dramatis personæ," and full scenic subdivisions, with descriptions of the scene.

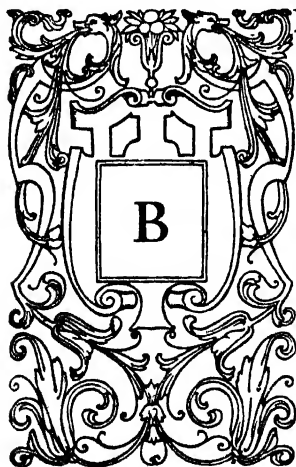


ACT FIRST — SCENE I — ROME

A STREET

*Enter a company of mutinous Citizens, with staves, clubs, and other weapons*

FIRST CITIZEN



BEFORE WE PROCEED  
any further, hear me speak.

ALL. Speak, speak.

FIRST CIT. You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?

ALL. Resolved, resolved.

FIRST CIT. First, you know Caius Marcius is chief enemy to the people.

ALL. We know't, we know't.

FIRST CIT. Let us kill him, and we'll have corn at our own price. Is 't a verdict? 10

ALL. No more talking on 't; let it be done: away, away!

10 *Is 't a verdict?*] Is that our unanimous decision?

SEC. CIT. One word, good citizens.

FIRST CIT. We are accounted poor citizens; the patricians, good. What authority surfeits on would relieve us: if they would yield us but the superfluity while it were wholesome, we might guess they relieved us humanely; but they think we are too dear: the leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an inventory to particularize their abundance; our sufferance is <sup>20</sup> a gain to them. Let us revenge this with our pikes, ere we become rakes: for the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.

SEC. CIT. Would you proceed especially against Caius Marcius?

ALL. Against him first: he's a very dog to the commonalty.

SEC. CIT. Consider you what services he has done for his country?

FIRST CIT. Very well; and could be content to give <sup>30</sup> him good report for 't, but that he pays himself with being proud.

SEC. CIT. Nay, but speak not maliciously.

15 *good*] in the mercantile sense of substantial, well to do. Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, I, iii, 12: "Antonio is a *good* man."

18 *they think we are too dear*] they think the expense of maintaining us is more than we are worth.

19 *object*] outward aspect, spectacle.

20 *particularize*] describe in detail.

20-21 *our sufferance . . . to them*] they gain by our suffering. The general sense is that our loss is their gain.

22 *we become rakes*] a reference to the proverbial expression "as lean as a rake." "Rake" is naturally associated with "pikes," which was sometimes used for "pitchforks" as well as in its ordinary sense of "dagger."

FIRST CIT. I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end: though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother and to be partly proud; which he is, even to the altitude of his virtue.

SEC. CIT. What he cannot help in his nature, you account a vice in him. You must in no way say he is covetous.

FIRST CIT. If I must not, I need not be barren of accusations; he hath faults, with surplus, to tire in repetition. [*Shouts within.*] What shouts are these? The other side o' the city is risen: why stay we prating here? to the Capitol!

ALL. Come, come.

FIRST CIT. Soft! who comes here?

*Enter MENENIUS AGRIPPA*

SEC. CIT. Worthy Menenius Agrippa; one that hath always loved the people. 50

FIRST CIT. He's one honest enough: would all the rest were so!

MEN. What work's, my countrymen, in hand? where go you  
With bats and clubs? the matter? speak, I pray you.

FIRST CIT. Our business is not unknown to the senate; they have had inkling, this fortnight, what we in-

37-38 *and to be partly proud . . . virtue*] and in part to indulge his pride; he is fully as proud as he is valorous.

55 FIRST CIT.] This and all this citizen's speeches to the end of the scene are given in the Folios to the "Second Citizen," from whom Capell

tend to do, which now we'll show 'em in deeds. They say poor suitors have strong breaths: they shall know we have strong arms too.

MEN. Why, masters, my good friends, mine honest neighbours, 60

Will you undo yourselves?

FIRST CIT. We cannot, sir, we are undone already.

MEN. I tell you, friends, most charitable care  
Have the patricians of you. For your wants,  
Your suffering in this dearth, you may as well  
Strike at the heaven with your staves as lift them  
Against the Roman state; whose course will on  
The way it takes, cracking ten thousand curbs  
Of more strong link asunder than can ever  
Appear in your impediment. For the dearth, 70  
The gods, not the patricians, make it, and  
Your knees to them, not arms, must help. Alack,  
You are transported by calamity  
Thither where more attends you, and you slander  
The helms o' the state, who care for you like fathers,  
When you curse them as enemies.

FIRST CIT. Care for us! True, indeed! They ne'er  
cared for us yet: suffer us to famish, and their store-  
houses crammed with grain; make edicts for usury, to

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transferred them to the "First Citizen." The "Second Citizen" has previously shown himself favourable to Coriolanus (Cf. ll. 28, 33 and 39, *supra*).

75 *helms*] helmsmen, pilots.

78-80 *suffer us to famish . . . usurers*] Plutarch distinguishes two separate popular outbreaks, one on account of the extortion of usurers, and the other on account of famine. Shakespeare combines the two.

support usurers; repeal daily any wholesome act established against the rich, and provide more piercing statutes daily, to chain up and restrain the poor. If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love they bear us.

MEN. Either you must  
Confess yourselves wondrous malicious,  
Or be accused of folly. I shall tell you  
A pretty tale: it may be you have heard it;  
But, since it serves my purpose, I will venture  
To stale 't a little more.

90

FIRST CIT. Well, I'll hear it, sir: yet you must not think to fob off our disgrace with a tale: but, an 't please you, deliver.

MEN. There was a time when all the body's members  
Rebell'd against the belly; thus accused it:  
That only like a gulf it did remain  
I' the midst o' the body, idle and unactive,  
Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing  
Like labour with the rest; where the other instruments

90 *stale 't*] make it common or familiar. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, II, ii, 239-240: "Age cannot wither her, nor custom *stale* Her infinite variety" *Stale* is Theobald's emendation of the Folio reading *scale*, which however might well stand. "Scale" in the sense of "scatter," "disperse," "spread," is not uncommon in Elizabethan English and is still alive in dialect.

92 *fob off our disgrace*] offer a deceitful excuse for our hardship or injury, delude us in our misery. For the alternative form "fubbed off" cf. 2 *Hen IV*, II, i, 32.

94-161 *There was a time . . . must have bale*] The whole of Menenius' story is drawn substantially from North's rendering of Plutarch

99 *where*] whereas.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT I

Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel, 100  
And, mutually participate, did minister  
Unto the appetite and affection common  
Of the whole body. The belly answer'd —

FIRST CIT. Well, sir, what answer made the belly?

MEN. Sir, I shall tell you. With a kind of smile,  
Which ne'er came from the lungs, but even thus —  
For, look you, I may make the belly smile  
As well as speak — it tauntingly replied  
To the discontented members, the mutinous parts  
That envied his receipt; even so most fitly 110  
As you malign our senators for that  
They are not such as you.

FIRST CIT. Your belly's answer? What!  
The kingly-crowned head, the vigilant eye,  
The counsellor heart, the arm our soldier,  
Our steed the leg, the tongue our trumpeter,  
With other muniments and petty helps  
In this our fabric, if that they —

MEN. What then?  
'Fore me, this fellow speaks! what then? what then?

FIRST CIT. Should by the cormorant belly be re-  
strain'd,  
Who is the sink o' the body, —

MEN. Well, what then? 120

105-106 *a kind of smile . . . lungs*] Hearty laughter was commonly supposed to come direct from the lungs. Cf. *As you like it*, II, vii, 30: "My *lungs* began to crow like chanticleer."

110 *most fitly*] exactly.

114 *counsellor heart*] The heart was reckoned the seat of the understanding. Cf line 134, *infra*.

FIRST CIT. The former agents, if they did complain,  
What could the belly answer?

MEN. I will tell you;  
If you'll bestow a small — of what you have little —  
Patience awhile, you'st hear the belly's answer.

FIRST CIT. You're long about it.

MEN. Note me this, good friend;  
Your most grave belly was deliberate,  
Not rash like his accusers, and thus answer'd:  
"True is it, my incorporate friends," quoth he,  
"That I receive the general food at first,  
Which you do live upon; and fit it is, 130  
Because I am the store-house and the shop  
Of the whole body: but, if you do remember,  
I send it through the rivers of your blood,  
Even to the court, the heart, to the seat o' the brain;  
And, through the cranks and offices of man,  
The strongest nerves and small inferior veins  
From me receive that natural competency  
Whereby they live: and though that all at once,  
You, my good friends," — this says the belly, mark  
me, —

FIRST CIT. Ay, sir; well, well.

MEN. "Though all at once cannot  
See what I do deliver out to each, 141  
Yet I can make my audit up, that all

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134 *to the seat o' the brain*] even to the royal residence of the thinking  
faculty, which, according to the old physiology, was the heart. Cf.  
line 114, *supra*, and note.

135 *cranks and offices*] winding passages and working-chambers.

136 *nerves*] sinews, muscle.



From me do back receive the flour of all,  
And leave me but the bran." What say you to 't?

FIRST CIT. It was an answer: how apply you this?

MEN. The senators of Rome are this good belly,  
And you the mutinous members: for examine  
Their counsels and their cares, digest things rightly  
Touching the weal o' the common, you shall find  
No public benefit which you receive 150  
But it proceeds or comes from them to you  
And no way from yourselves. What do you think,  
You, the great toe of this assembly?

FIRST CIT. I the great toe! why the great toe?

MEN. For that, being one o' the lowest, basest,  
poorest,  
Of this most wise rebellion, thou go'st foremost:  
Thou rascal, that art worst in blood to run,  
Lead'st first to win some vantage.  
But make you ready your stiff bats and clubs:  
Rome and her rats are at the point of battle; 160  
The one side must have bale.

*Enter CAIUS MARCIUS*

Hail, noble Marcius!

MAR. Thanks. What's the matter, you dissentious  
rogues,

148 *digest*] The Folios give the older form *disgest*.

149 *weal o' the common*] welfare of the common people.

157 *rascal*] The word was specifically applied to a deer in bad condition  
and unfit for the chase.

*in blood to run*] in condition for running.

161 *have bale*] suffer ruin. "Bale" had become an archaic word in  
Shakespeare's day.

That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion,  
Make yourselves scabs?

FIRST CIT. We have ever your good word.

MAR. He that will give good words to thee will flatter  
Beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs,  
That like nor peace nor war? the one affrights you,  
The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,  
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares,  
Where foxes, geese: you are no surer, no, 170  
Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,  
Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is  
To make him worthy whose offence subdues him  
And curse that justice did it. Who deserves greatness  
Deserves your hate; and your affections are  
A sick man's appetite, who desires most that  
Which would increase his evil. He that depends  
Upon your favours swims with fins of lead  
And hews down oaks with rushes. Hang ye! Trust ye?  
With every minute you do change a mind, 180  
And call him noble that was now your hate,  
Him vile that was your garland. What's the matter,

164 *scabs*] a common term of contemptuous reproach. Its quibbling use in association with "itch" is not uncommon in Shakespeare Cf. *Much Ado*, III, iii, 92-93.

166 *Beneath abhorring*] What is beneath contempt.

172-174 *Your virtue is . . . did it*] Your notion of virtue is to treat as worthy of honour him who is brought low or conquered by crime, and to curse that justice which paid him his deserts.

182 *your garland*] your ornament, your crown Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.* IV. xv, 64: "wither'd is the garland of the war."

That in these several places of the city  
You cry against the noble senate, who,  
Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else  
Would feed on one another? What's their seeking?

MEN. For corn at their own rates; whereof, they say,  
The city is well stored.

MAR. Hang 'em! They say!  
They'll sit by the fire, and presume to know  
What's done i' the Capitol; who's like to rise, 190  
Who thrives and who declines; side factions and give  
out

Conjectural marriages; making parties strong,  
And feebling such as stand not in their liking  
Below their cobbled shoes. They say there's grain  
enough!

Would the nobility lay aside their ruth,  
And let me use my sword, I 'ld make a quarry  
With thousands of these quarter'd slaves, as high  
As I could pick my lance.

MEN. Nay, these are almost thoroughly persuaded;  
For though abundantly they lack discretion, 200  
Yet are they passing cowardly. But, I beseech you,  
What says the other troop?

191 *side factions and give out*] (who) take sides in or support factions,  
and (who) announce.

192 *making parties strong*] strengthening some parties or factions.

195 *their ruth*] their pitying tenderness.

196 *a quarry*] a heap of deer slaughtered in the chase.

197 *quarter'd slaves*] slaves cut down by the sword. Cf. *Jul. Cas.*, III, i,  
268: "Their infants *quarter'd* with the hands of war."

198 *pick*] pitch.

MAR. They are dissolved: hang 'em!  
They said they were an-hungry; sigh'd forth proverbs,  
That hunger broke stone walls, that dogs must eat,  
That meat was made for mouths, that the gods sent not  
Corn for the rich men only: with these shreds  
They vented their complainings; which being answer'd,  
And a petition granted them, a strange one —  
To break the heart of generosity 209  
And make bold power look pale — they threw their caps  
As they would hang them on the horns o' the moon,  
Shouting their emulation.

MEN. What is granted them?

MAR. Five tribunes to defend their vulgar wisdoms,  
Of their own choice: one's Junius Brutus,  
Sicinius Velutus, and I know not — 'Sdeath!  
The rabble should have first unroof'd the city,  
Ere so prevail'd with me: it will in time  
Win upon power and throw forth greater themes  
For insurrection's arguing.

MEN. This is strange.

MAR. Go get you home, you fragments! 220

*Enter a Messenger, hastily*

MESS. Where's Caius Marcius?

MAR. Here: what's the matter?

206 *these shreds*] these odds and ends.

209 *To break the heart of generosity*] To take the heart or life out of the  
power of nobility, to give the power of the nobles its deathblow.

212 *emulation*] envy or factious rivalry.

219 *For insurrection's arguing*] To be discussed by means of insurrection.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT I

MESS. The news is, sir, the Volsces are in arms.

MAR. I am glad on 't: then we shall ha' means to vent

Our musty superfluity. See, our best elders.

*Enter COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and other Senators; JUNIUS BRUTUS and SICINIUS VELUTUS*

FIRST SEN. Marcius, 't is true that you have lately told us;

The Volsces are in arms.

MAR. They have a leader,  
Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to 't.  
I sin in envying his nobility;  
And were I any thing but what I am,  
I would wish me only he.

COM. You have fought together? 230

MAR. Were half to half the world by the ears, and he  
Upon my party, I'd revolt, to make  
Only my wars with him: he is a lion  
That I am proud to hunt.

FIRST SEN. Then, worthy Marcius,  
Attend upon Cominius to these wars.

COM. It is your former promise.

MAR. Sir, it is;  
And I am constant. Titus Lartius, thou

223-224 *vent Our musty superfluity]* work off our mouldy superfluity of population.

227 *put you to 't]* put you on your mettle.

232 *Upon my party]* On my side.

Shalt see me once more strike at Tullus' face.

What, art thou stiff? stand'st out?

TIT. No, Caius Marcius;

I'll lean upon one crutch, and fight with t' other, 240  
Ere stay behind this business.

MEN. O, true-bred!

FIRST SEN. Your company to the Capitol; where, I  
know,

Our greatest friends attend us.

TIT. [To Com.] Lead you on.

[To Mar.] Follow Cominius; we must follow you;  
Right worthy you priority.

COM. Noble Marcius!

FIRST SEN. [To the Citizens] Hence to your homes; be  
gone!

MAR. Nay, let them follow:

The Volsces have much corn; take these rats thither  
To gnaw their garners. Worshipful mutiners,  
Your valour puts well forth: pray, follow.

[Citizens steal away. Exeunt all but Sicinius and Brutus.]

SIC. Was ever man so proud as is this Marcius? 250

BRU. He has no equal.

SIC. When we were chosen tribunes for the people, —

BRU. Mark'd you his lip and eyes?

SIC. Nay, but his taunts.

239 *art thou stiff?*] are your limbs too stiff to join in fight?

245 *Noble Marcius!*] Thus the Folios. Theobald substituted *Noble Lartius!* but the change is needless.

248-249 *Worshipful mutiners . . . forth*] Honoured rebels, your valour looks promising. The form "mutineer" is found in *Tempest*, III, ii, 34, and "mutine" in *Hamlet*, V, ii, 6. "Mutiner" is not found elsewhere in Shakespeare.

# CORIOLANUS

## ACT I

BRU. Being moved, he will not spare to gird the  
gods.

Sic. Bemock the modest moon.

BRU. The present wars devour him ! he is grown  
Too proud to be so valiant.

Sic.                                Such a nature,  
Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow .  
Which he treads on at noon: but I do wonder  
His insolence can brook to be commanded  
Under Cominius.

280

BRU. Fame, at the which he aims,  
In whom already he's well graced, cannot  
Better be held, nor more attain'd, than by  
A place below the first: for what miscarries  
Shall be the general's fault, though he perform  
To the utmost of a man; and giddy censure  
Will then cry out of Marcius "O, if he  
Had borne the business!"

Sic. Besides, if things go well,  
Opinion, that so sticks on Marcius, shall  
Of his demerits rob Cominius.

BRU. Come: 270  
Half all Cominius' honours are to Marcius.

254 *qird*] sneer at.

257 *Too proud to be*] Too proud of being.

258 *Tickled with good success*] Pleased, put in a good humour by the good result of his activity.

266 *giddy*] inexperienced, thoughtless.

270 *demerits*] The general repute that Marcius so firmly enjoys shall rob Cominius of his due praise. "Demerits" is constantly used in the sense of "merits."

Though Marcius earn'd them not; and all his faults  
To Marcius shall be honours, though indeed  
In aught he merit not. •

Sir. Let's hence, and hear  
How the dispatch is made; and in what fashion,  
More than his singularity, he goes  
Upon this present action.

**BRU.** Let 's along. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II — CORIOLI

## THE SENATE-HOUSE

*Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS, with Senators of Corioli*

FIRST SEN. So, your opinion is, Aufidius,  
That they of Rome are enter'd in our counsels,  
And know how we proceed.

AUF. Is it not yours?  
 What ever have been thought on in this state,  
 That could be brought to bodily act ere Rome  
 Had circumvention? 'Tis not four days gone  
 Since I heard thence: these are the words: I think

276 *More than his singularity*] Apart from the (haughty manner that is) characteristic of his individuality.

2 are enter'd in our counsels] have gained entry into or knowledge of our counsels.

6 *Had circumvention*] Had got the knowledge wherewith to circumvent  
or outwit our plans.



## CORIOLANUS

ACT I

I have the letter here: yes, here it is:  
[*Reads*] "*They have press'd a power, but it is not known*  
*Whether for east or west: the dearth is great;* 10  
*The people mutinous: and it is rumour'd,*  
*Cominius, Marcius your old enemy,*  
*Who is of Rome worse hated than of you,*  
*And Titus Lartius, a most valiant Roman,*  
*These three lead on this preparation*  
*Whither 't is bent: most likely 't is for you:*  
*Consider of it."*

FIRST SEN. Our army 's in the field:  
We never yet made doubt but Rome was ready  
To answer us.

AUF. Nor did you think it folly  
To keep your great pretences veil'd till when 20  
They needs must show themselves; which in the  
hatching,

It seem'd, appear'd to Rome. By the discovery  
We shall be shorten'd in our aim, which was  
To take in many towns ere almost Rome  
Should know we were afoot.

SEC. SEN. Noble Aufidius,  
Take your commission; hie you to your bands:

---

9 (Stage Direction) *Reads*] Theobald read *Reading*. The Folios omit the stage direction altogether. Shakespeare's letters are usually in prose.

*press'd a power*] impressed or enlisted troops by force.

15 *preparation*] army ready for the field.

20 *great pretences*] important intentions.

23 *shorten'd in our aim*] hindered in our project.

24 *take in*] conquer, subdue: a common usage Cf. III, ii, 59, *infra*.

Let us alone to guard Corioli:  
 If they set down before 's, for the remove  
 Bring up your army; but, I think, you'll find  
 They've not prepared for us.

AUF.

O, doubt not that;

30

I speak from certainties. Nay, more,  
 Some parcels of their power are forth already,  
 And only hitherward. I leave your honours.  
 If we and Caius Marcius chance to meet,  
 'Tis sworn between us, we shall ever strike  
 Till one can do no more.

ALL.

The gods assist you!

AUF. And keep your honours safe!

FIRST SEN.

Farewell.

SEC. SEN.

Farewell.

ALL. Farewell.

[*Exeunt.*]

### SCENE III — ROME

#### A ROOM IN MARCIUS' HOUSE

*Enter VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA: they set them down on two low stools, and sew*

VOL. I pray you, daughter, sing, or express yourself  
 in a more comfortable sort: if my son were my husband,  
 I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won  
 honour than in the embracements of his bed where he  
 would show most love. When yet he was but tender-

28-29 *If they . . . your army*] If the Romans sit down before (*i. e.*, be-  
 siege) us, bring up the army in order to remove or dislodge them.

35 *we shall ever strike*] we shall keep on attacking one another.

2 *comfortable*] cheerful.

bodied, and the only son of my womb; when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way; when, for a day of *kings' entreaties*, a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding; I, considering how honour would become such a person; that it was no better than picture-like to hang by the wall, if renown made it not stir, was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man.

VIR. But had he died in the business, madam: how then?

VOL. Then his good report should have been my son; 20 I therein would have found issue. Hear me profess sincerely: had I a dozen sons, each in my love alike, and none less dear than thine and my good Marcius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.

*Enter a Gentlewoman*

GENT. Madam, the Lady Valeria is come to visit you.

VIR. Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself.

6-7 *when youth . . . his way*] when his youthful beauty attracted every one's attention

14 *his brows bound with oak*] a crown of oak leaves was awarded to any soldier who saved a companion's life in battle Cf II, i, 118, and II, ii, 96, *infra*. Coriolanus, according to Plutarch, performed this exploit in his first campaign, and won the oak-leaf garland.

27 *retire myself*] withdraw.

VOL. Indeed, you shall not.

Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum;  
See him pluck Aufidius down by the hair;  
As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning him:  
Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus:  
"Come on, you cowards! you were got in fear,  
Though you were born in Rome:" his bloody brow  
With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes,  
Like to a harvest-man that 's task'd to mow  
Or all, or lose his hire.

VIR. His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood!

VOL. Away, you fool! it more becomes a man  
Than gilt his trophy: the breasts of Hecuba,  
When she did suckle Hector, look'd not lovelier  
Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood  
At Grecian sword, contemning. Tell Valeria  
We are fit to bid her welcome. [Exit Gent.

VIR. Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius!

VOL. He'll beat Aufidius' head below his knee,  
And tread upon his neck.

33 got] begotten.

40 Than gilt his trophy] Than gold or gilding becomes the decorated monument or memorial set up in honour of a general's victory.

43 At Grecian sword, contemning] Thus Collier; "contemning" being treated as a participle used adverbially, i. e., "contemptuously." The First Folio reads *At Grecian sword. Contemning, tell* (as if "Contemning" were the name of an attendant gentlewoman). The Second and Third Folios read substantially *Contending: tell* while the Fourth Folio reads *contending: tell*. Capell's reading *At Grecian swords' contending. — Tell* makes fair sense, though Collier's change is an improvement, and adheres more closely to the First Folio form *Contemning*.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT I.

*Enter VALERIA, with an Usher and Gentlewoman*

VAL. My ladies both, good day to you.

VOL. Sweet madam.

VIR. I am glad to see your ladyship.

VAL. How do you both? you are manifest house-keepers. What are you sewing here? A fine spot, in good faith. How does your little son?

VIR. I thank your ladyship; well, good madam.

VOL. He had rather see the swords and hear a drum than look upon his schoolmaster.

VAL. O' my word, the father's son: I'll swear, 't is a very pretty boy. O' my troth, I looked upon him o' Wednesday half an hour together; has such a confirmed countenance. I saw him run after a gilded butterfly; 60 and when he caught it, he let it go again; and after it again; and over and over he comes, and up again; caught it again: or whether his fall enraged him, or how 't was, he did so set his teeth, and tear it; O, I warrant, how he mammocked it!

VOL. One on 's father's moods.

VAL. Indeed, la, 't is a noble child.

51-52 *manifest housekeepers*] evident stay-at-homes.

52 *A fine spot*] A small or delicate pattern in the embroidery. Cf. *Othello*, III, iii, 438-439: "a handkerchief *Spotted* with strawberries."

59 *confirmed countenance*] steady, firm look. Cf. *Much Ado*, V, iv, 17: "Which I will do with *confirm'd countenance*."

65 *mammocked*] tore in pieces. "Mammock" is often found in the sense of morsel or fragment.

66 *moods*] fits of passion.

\*VIR. A crack, madam.

VAL. Come, lay aside your stitchery; I must have you play the idle huswife with me this afternoon. 70

VIR. No, good madam; I will not out of doors.

VAL. Not out of doors!

VOL. She shall, she shall.

VIR. Indeed, no, by your patience; I'll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars.

VAL. Fie, you confine yourself most unreasonably: come, you must go visit the good lady that lies in.

VIR. I will wish her speedy strength, and visit her with my prayers; but I cannot go thither.

VOL. Why, I pray you? 80

VIR. 'T is not to save labour, nor that I want love.

VAL. You would be another Penelope: yet, they say, all the yarn she spun in Ulysses' absence did but fill Ithaca full of moths. Come; I would your cambric were sensible as your finger, that you might leave pricking it for pity. Come, you shall go with us.

VIR. No, good madam, pardon me; indeed, I will not forth.

VAL. In truth, la, go with me, and I'll tell you excellent news of your husband. 90

VIR. O, good madam, there can be none yet.

VAL. Verily, I do not jest with you; there came news from him last night.

VIR. Indeed, madam?

VAL. In earnest, it's true; I heard a senator speak it.

68 *A crack*] A sprightly precocious lad.

85 *sensible*] sensitive, susceptible of feeling.

Thus it is: the Volsces have an army forth; *against* whom Cominius the general is gone, with one part of our Roman power: your lord and Titus Lartius are set down before their city Corioli; they nothing doubt prevailing, and to make it brief wars. This is true, on mine honour; and so, I pray, go with us. 101

VIR. Give me excuse, good madam; I will obey you in every thing hereafter.

VOL. Let her alone, lady; as she is now, she will but disease our better mirth.

VAL. In troth, I think she would. Fare you well, then. Come, good sweet lady. Prithee, Virgilia, turn thy solemnness out o' door, and go along with us.

VIR. No, at a word, madam; indeed, I must not. I wish you much mirth. 110

VAL. Well then, farewell. [Exeunt.]

#### SCENE IV — BEFORE CORIOLI

*Enter, with drum and colours, MARCIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, Captains and Soldiers. To them a Messenger*

MAR. Yonder comes news: a wager they have met.

LART. My horse to yours, no.

99 *Corioli*] Pope's correction of the Folios, which never adopt this, the correct classical, form. The First Folio here reads *Carioles*, the Second, *Cariolus*, and the Third and Fourth, *Coriolus*.

99-100 *they nothing . . . brief wars*] they have no sort of doubt of their victory and of making the war a brief one.

105 *disease*] spoil.

109 *at a word*] in short, once for all.

MAR.

'T is done.

LART.

Agreed.

MAR. Say, has our general met the enemy?

MESS. They lie in view; but have not spoke as yet.

LART. So, the good horse is mine.

MAR.

I'll buy him of you.

LART. No, I'll nor sell nor give him: lend you him I will

For half a hundred years. Summon the town.

MAR. How far off lie these armies?

MESS.

Within this mile and half.

MAR. Then shall we hear their 'larum, and they ours.

Now, Mars, I prithee, make us quick in work, 10

That we with smoking swords may march from hence,

To help our fielded friends! Come, blow thy blast.

*They sound a parley. Enter two Senators with others, on the walls.*

Tullus Aufidius, is he within your walls?

FIRST SEN. No, nor a man that fears you less than he,  
That's lesser than a little. Hark, our drums

*[Drum afar off.]*

Are bringing forth our youth! we'll break our walls,

Rather than they shall pound us up: our gates,

Which yet seem shut, we have but pinn'd with rushes;

They'll open of themselves. Hark you, far off!

*[Alarum far off.]*

4 *spoke*] given the signal to engage.

12 *our fielded friends*] our friends encamped on the field of battle

14 *less than he*] there is a tangle here; "less than" has the effect of "more than." The meiosis is due to the common practice of employing the double negative to emphasise a negative intention.

17 *pound us up*] imprison us, bottle us up.



There is Aufidius; list, what work he makes      20  
Amongst your cloven army.

MAR. O, they are at it!

LART. Their noise be our instruction. Ladders, ho!

*Enter the army of the Volsces*

MAR. They fear us not, but issue forth their city.  
Now put your shields before your hearts, and fight  
With hearts more proof than shields. Advance, brave  
Titus:

They do disdain us much beyond our thoughts,  
Which makes me sweat with wrath. Come on, my  
fellows:

He that retires, I'll take him for a Volsee,  
And he shall feel mine edge.

*Alarum. The Romans are beat back to their trenches. Re-enter  
MARCUS, cursing*

MAR. All the contagion of the south light on you,      30  
You shames of Rome! you herd of — Boils and  
plagues  
Plaster you o'er; that you may be abhorr'd  
Farther than seen, and one infect another  
Against the wind a mile! You souls of geese,

25 *more proof*] more tried, better tested, stouter.

30 *the south*] the south wind which was supposed to bring pestilence  
in its train. Cf. *Cymb.*, II, iii, 131: "The south-fog rot him."

31 *you herd of —*] Johnson inserted the dash. Marcus' fury does not  
permit him to end the sentence coherently.

That bear the shapes of men, how have you run  
From slaves that apes would beat! Pluto and hell!  
All hurt behind; backs red, and faces pale  
With flight and agued fear! Mend, and charge home,  
Or, by the fires of heaven, I'll leave the foe,  
And make my wars on you: look to't: come on; 40  
If yqu'll stand fast, we'll beat them to their wives,  
As they us to our trenches followed.

*Another alarum. The Volsces fly, and MARCIUS follows them to the gates*

So, now the gates are ope: now prove good seconds  
'Tis for the followers fortune widens them,  
Not for the fliers: mark me, and do the like.

*[Enters the gates.]*

FIRST SOL. Fool-hardiness; not I.

SEC. SOL. Nor I.

*[Marcius is shut in.]*

FIRST SOL. See, they have shut him in.

ALL. To the pot, I warrant him.

*[Alarum continues.]*

*Re-enter TITUS LARTIUS*

LART. What is become of Marcius?

ALL. Slain, sir, doubtless.

38 *agued fear*] trembling fear; trembling being a main characteristic of an ague fit.

*Mend*] correct your errors.

39 *the fires of heaven*] apparently, the stars. "Fires of hell" would seem to be more appropriate to the context.

48 *To the pot*] To ruin; still commonly employed in the vulgarity "gone to pot."

# CORIOLANUS

ACT I

FIRST SOL. Following the fliers at the very heels, 50  
With them he enters; who, upon the sudden,  
Clapp'd to their gates: he is himself alone,  
To answer all the city.

LART. O noble fellow!  
Who sensibly outdares his senseless sword,  
And, when it bows, stands up! Thou art left,  
Marcius:

A carbuncle entire, as big as thou art,  
Were not so rich a jewel. Thou wast a soldier  
Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible  
Only in strokes; but, with thy grim looks and  
The thunder-like percussion of thy sounds, 60  
Thou madest thine enemies shake, as if the world  
Were feverous and did tremble.

54 *sensibly*] consciously, with full consciousness of his peril.

57-58 *Thou wast a soldier . . . Cato's wish*] Theobald's emendation of the unintelligible reading *Calues* (for *Cato's*) of the First Folio, and *Calves* of the Second, Third, and Fourth Folios. Marcus Porcius Cato, the elder, called "the censor," the great Roman soldier and moralist, who distinguished himself in the second Punic war, lived some two and a half centuries after Coriolanus (234-149 B. C.). But the anachronistic reference to him in the text here may well be due to Shakespeare's hasty misreading of Plutarch, who wrote of Coriolanus that he "was even such another as Cato would have a soldier and a captain to be." This personal comment of the Greek biographer Shakespeare converts into an admiring contemporary judgment on Coriolanus.

61-62 *as if . . . tremble*] Cf. *Macb.*, II, iii, 58-59: "some say, the earth  
*Was feverous and did shake.*"

*Re-enter MARCIUS, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy*

FIRST SOL.

Look, sir.

LART.

O, 't is Marcus!

Let's fetch him off, or make remain alike.

*[They fight, and all enter the city.]*

SCENE V — WITHIN CORIOLI

A STREET

*Enter certain Romans, with spoils*

FIRST ROM. This will I carry to Rome.

SEC. ROM. And I this.

THIRD ROM. A murrain on't! I took this for silver.

*[Alarum continues still afar off.]*

*Enter MARCIUS and TITUS LARTIUS with a trumpet*

MAR. See here these movers that do prize their hours  
At a crack'd drachma! Cushions, leaden spoons,  
Irons of a doit, doublets that hangmen would

63 *Let's fetch . . . alike*] Let us rescue him, or make our stay here with him.

3 (Stage Direction) *a trumpet*] a trumpeter.

4 *movers*] probably "stragglers," "loafers." In Plutarch Coriolanus complains at this point of the battle that his men "run straggling here and there."

*hours*] time. Thus the Folios. Rowe needlessly substituted *honours*.

5 *drachma*] the Greek coin, which would be unfamiliar at Rome. But Plutarch invariably reckons money in Greek currency.

6 *Irons of a doit*] Iron implements worth a doit, i. e., the smallest copper coin.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT I

Bury with those that wore them, these base slaves,  
Ere yet the fight be done, pack up: down with them!  
And hark, what noise the general makes! To him!  
There is the man of my soul's hate, Aufidius, 10  
Piercing our Romans: then, valiant Titus, take  
Convenient numbers to make good the city;  
Whilst I, with those that have the spirit, will haste,  
To help Cominius.

LART. Worthy sir, thou bleed'st;  
Thy exercise hath been too violent  
For a second course of fight.

MAR. Sir, praise me not;  
My work hath yet not warm'd me: fare you well:  
The blood I drop is rather physical  
Than dangerous to me: to Aufidius thus  
I will appear, and fight.

LART. Now the fair goddess, Fortune, 20  
Fall deep in love with thee; and her great charms  
Misguide thy opposers' swords! Bold gentleman,  
Prosperity be thy page!

MAR. Thy friend no less  
Than those she placeth highest! So farewell.

LART. Thou worthiest Marcius! [Exit Marcius.  
Go sound thy trumpet in the market-place;  
Call thither all the officers o' the town,  
Where they shall know our mind. Away! [Exeunt.

16 *course of fight*] bout; "course" was technically used of a bout in bear-baiting. Cf. *Lear*, III, vii, 53: "I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course."

18 *physical*] wholesome, medicinal.

23 *be thy page*] attend thee, follow thee, as a page boy.

## SCENE VI—NEAR THE CAMP OF COMINIUS

*Enter COMINIUS, as it were in retire, with Soldiers*

COM. Breathe you, my friends: well fought; we are  
come off

Like Romans, neither foolish in our stands,  
Nor cowardly in retire: believe me, sirs,  
We shall be charged again. Whiles we have struck,  
By interims and conveying gusts we have heard  
The charges of our friends. Ye Roman gods,  
Lead their successes as we wish our own,  
That both our powers, with smiling fronts encountering,  
May give you thankful sacrifice!

*Enter a Messenger*

Thy news?

MESS. The citizens of Corioli have issued, 10  
And given to Lartius and to Marcius battle:  
I saw our party to their trenches driven,  
And then I came away.

COM. Though thou speak'st truth,  
Methinks thou speak'st not well. How long is't since?

---

1-3 *we are come off . . . retire*] we have broken off the engagement like  
Romans, neither foolishly making hopeless resistance nor beating a  
retreat in cowardly wise.

5 *By interims and conveying gusts*] At intervals and by gusts of wind bring-  
ing the noise.

6 *Ye*] Hanmer's correction of the Folio *The*.

10 *issued*] issued forth in a sortie.

MESS. Above an hour, my lord.

15

COM. 'Tis not a mile; briefly we heard their drums:  
How couldst thou in a mile confound an hour,  
And bring thy news so late?

MESS. Spies of the Volsces  
Held me in chase, that I was forced to wheel  
Three or four miles about; else had I, sir, 20  
Half an hour since brought my report.

*Enter MARCIUS*

COM. Who's yonder,  
That does appear as he were flay'd? O gods!  
He has the stamp of Marcius; and I have  
Before-time seen him thus.

MAR. Come I too late?

COM. The shepherd knows not thunder from a tabor  
More than I know the sound of Marcius' tongue  
From every meaner man.

MAR. Come I too late?

COM. Ay, if you come not in the blood of others,  
But mantled in your own.

MAR. O, let me clip ye  
In arms as sound as when I woo'd; in heart 30  
As merry as when our nuptial day was done,  
And tapers burn'd to bedward!

COM. Flower of warriors,  
How is't with Titus Lartius?

16 *briefly*] a short time ago.

17 *confound*] waste or spend. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, I, iii, 100: "He did *confound* the best part of an hour."

25 *tabor*] kettledrum.

MAR. As with a man busied about decrees:  
Condemning some to death, and some to exile;  
Ransoming him or pitying, threatening the other;  
Holding Corioli in the name of Rome,  
Even like a fawning greyhound in the leash,  
To let him slip at will.

COM. Where is that slave  
Which told me they had beat you to your trenches? 40  
Where is he? call him hither.

MAR. Let him alone;  
He did inform the truth: but for our gentlemen,  
The common file — a plague! tribunes for them! —  
The mouse ne'er shunn'd the cat as they did budge  
From rascals worse than they.

COM. But how prevail'd you?

MAR. Will the time serve to tell? I do not think.  
Where is the enemy? are you lords o' the field?  
If not, why cease you till you are so?

COM. Marcius,  
We have at disadvantage fought, and did  
Retire to win our purpose. 50

MAR. How lies their battle? know you on which side  
They have placed their men of trust?

COM. As I guess, Marcius,  
Their bands i' the vaward are the Antiates,

36 *Ransoming him or pitying*] Taking ransom of one or setting him free  
out of pity.

43 *The common file*] The rank and file.

44 *budge*] move away, retreat.

51 *battle*] army arrayed for battle.

53 *the Antiates*] Pope's correction of the Folio reading *the Antients*.



Of their best trust; o'er them Aufidius,  
Their very heart of hope.

MAR. I do beseech you,  
By all the battles wherein we have fought,  
By the blood we have shed together, by the vows  
We have made to endure friends, that you directly  
Set me against Aufidius and his Antiates;  
And that you not delay the present, but, 60  
Filling the air with swords advanced and darts,  
We prove this very hour.

COM. Though I could wish  
You were conducted to a gentle bath,  
And balms applied to you, yet dare I never  
Deny your asking: take your choice of those  
That best can aid your action.

MAR. Those are they  
That most are willing. If any such be here —  
As it were sin to doubt — that love this painting  
Wherein you see me smear'd; if any fear 70  
Lesser his person than an ill report;  
If any think brave death outweighs bad life,

Plutarch's words render the change irrefutable: "The bandes which were in the vaward [i. e., the vanguard] of their battell were those of the Antiates whom they esteemed to be the warlikest men," etc. See also line 59, *infra*.

61 *advanced*] upraised.

69-70 *if any fear Lesser . . . report*] if any man cherish less fear on account of his personal safety than on account of a bad reputation, if any man set his character above his safety. "Lesser," which is read by the Third and Fourth Folios, is not uncommonly used for "less." The First and Second Folios read *Lessen*, which makes no sense.

And that his country's dearer than himself;  
 Let him alone, or so many so minded,  
 Wave thus, to express his disposition,  
 And follow Marcius.

*[They all shout, and wave their swords; take him  
 up in their arms, and cast up their caps.]*

O, me alone! make you a sword of me?  
 If these shows be not outward, which of you  
 But is four Volsces? none of you but is  
 Able to bear against the great Aufidius  
 A shield as hard as his. A certain number, 80  
 Though thanks to all, must I select from all: the rest  
 Shall bear the business in some other fight,  
 As cause will be obey'd. Please you to march;  
 And four shall quickly draw out my command,  
 Which men are best inclined.

Com. March on, my fellows:  
 Make good this ostentation, and you shall  
 Divide in all with us. *[Exeunt.]*

76 *O, me alone! . . . me?*] Thus substantially the Folios, though Capell first inserted the note of interrogation at the end of the line. Marcius is rebuking the soldiers for taking him up all alone in their arms when he had just bidden them wave or brandish their swords. He reproaches his men with making a sword of him.

83 *As cause will be obey'd*] As occasion shall require.

84-85 *four . . . inclined*] four officers shall quickly select for my command men who seem best fitted for the enterprise.

86 *ostentation*] show of courage. "Ostentation" has no ironical shade of meaning here.

## SCENE VII—THE GATES OF CORIOLI

TITUS LARTIUS, *having set a guard upon Corioli, going with drum and trumpet toward COMINIUS and CAIUS MARCIUS, enters with a Lieutenant, other Soldiers, and a Scout*

LART. So, let the ports be guarded: keep your duties,  
As I have set them down. If I do send, dispatch  
Those centuries to our aid; the rest will serve  
For a short holding: if we lose the field,  
We cannot keep the town.

LIEU. Fear not our care, sir.

LART. Hence, and shut your gates upon's.  
Our guider, come; to the Roman camp conduct us.  
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VIII—A FIELD OF BATTLE BETWEEN THE  
ROMAN AND THE VOLSCIAN CAMPS

*Alarum as in battle. Enter, from opposite sides, MARCIUS and  
AUFIDIUS*

MAR. I'll fight with none but thee; for I do hate thee  
Worse than a promise-breaker.

AUF. We hate alike:  
Not Afric owns a serpent I abhor  
More than thy fame and envy. Fix thy foot.

SCENE vii, 1 *ports*] gates; so V, vi, 6, *infra*.

3 *centuries*] companies of a hundred men each.

SCENE viii, 4 *thy fame and envy*] thy envied fame; probably a hendiadys.

But Theobald inserted a comma after *fame*, making *and envy* an elliptical phrase for "and [I also] envy [thy fame]," a clause balancing "I abhor" in line 3.

\*MAR. Let the first budger die the other's slave,  
And the gods doom him after!

AUF. If I fly, Marcius,  
Holloa me like a hare.

MAR. Within these three hours, Tullus,  
Alone I fought in your Corioli walls,  
And made what work I pleased: 't is not my blood  
Wherein thou seest me mask'd; for thy revenge 10  
Wrench up thy power to the highest.

AUF. Wert thou the Hector  
That was the whip of your bragg'd progeny,  
Thou shouldst not 'scape me here.

*[They fight, and certain Volsces come in the aid of Aufidius.*

*Marcus fights till they be driven in breathless.*

Officious, and not valiant, you have shamed me  
In your condemned seconds. [Exeunt.]

#### SCENE IX — THE ROMAN CAMP

*Flourish. Alarum. A retreat is sounded. Enter, from one side, COMINIUS with the Romans; from the other side, MARCIUS, with his arm in a scarf*

COM. If I should tell thee o'er this thy day's work,  
Thou'lt not believe thy deeds: but I'll report it,

6 *doom him after]* condemn him afterwards.

11 *Wrench up]* Screw up. Cf. *Macb.*, I, vii, 60. "But screw your courage to the sticking-place."

12 *the whip . . . progeny]* the scourging champion of your boasted race.  
The Romans claimed descent from the Trojans. Hector was the most valiant of the Trojan chiefs.

14-15 *you have shamed . . . seconds]* you have shamed me by coming to my aid as damnable seconds.

Where senators shall mingle tears with smiles;  
Where great patricians shall attend, and shrug,  
I' the end admire; where ladies shall be frightened,  
And, gladly quaked, hear more; where the dull  
tribunes,

That, with the fusty plebeians, hate thine honours,  
Shall say against their hearts "We thank the gods  
Our Rome hath such a soldier."  
Yet camest thou to a morsel of this feast,  
Having fully dined before.

10

*Enter TITUS LARTIUS, with his power, from the pursuit*

LART. O general,  
Here is the steed, we the caparison:  
Hadst thou beheld —

MAR. Pray now, no more: my mother,  
Who has a charter to extol her blood,  
When she does praise me grieves me. I have done  
As you have done; that's what I can: induced  
As you have been; that's for my country:

6 *gladly quaked*] rejoicing in their trembling fears.

7 *plebeians*] usually as here accented by Shakespeare on the first syllable.

8 *against their hearts*] unwillingly, in spite of themselves.

10-11 *Yet camest thou . . . before*] This exploit of yours was but a morsel of this feast of war, seeing that you had had already a full meal of fighting at Corioli.

12 *Here is the steed . . . caparison*] Here is the man who performed the action. We were mere passive ornament of the show.

14 *a charter . . . blood*] a special right or privilege to praise her son.

He that has but effected his good will  
*Hath overta'en mine act.*

COM. You shall not be  
The grave of your deserving; Rome must know 20  
The value of her own: 't were a concealment  
Worse than a theft, no less than a traducement,  
To hide your doings; and to silence that,  
Which, to the spire and top of praises vouch'd,  
Would seem but modest: therefore, I beseech you —  
In sign of what you are, not to reward  
What you have done — before our army hear me.

MAR. I have some wounds upon me, and they  
smart  
To hear themselves remember'd.

COM. Should they not,  
Well might they fester 'gainst ingratitude, 30  
And tent themselves with death. Of all the horses,  
Whereof we have ta'en good, and good store, of all  
The treasure in this field achieved and city,  
We render you the tenth; to be ta'en forth,

18-19 *He that . . . act*] He that has merely put into effect his good purpose has outdone my own deeds.

20 *The grave of*] That which buries, keeps out of sight.

22 *a traducement*] an act of slander.

23-25 *to silence . . . but modest*] to pass over in silence that which, even when praised to the highest pitch, would still suffer from the modesty of the encomium; no praise could do full justice to your valour.

29 *Should they not*] *sc.* be remembered.

31 *tent themselves with death*] find cure in death. "To tent" means literally "to probe with a surgical instrument," and hence "to treat surgically," "to dress," "to doctor."

32 *good, and good store*] a good store of excellent qualities.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT I

Before the common distribution, at  
Your only choice.

MAR. I thank you, general;  
But cannot make my heart consent to take  
A bribe to pay my sword: I do refuse it,  
And stand upon my common part with those  
That have beheld the doing.

40

[*A long flourish. They all cry "Marcius! Marcius!"*  
*cast up their caps and lances: Cominius*  
*and Lartius stand bare.*

MAR. May these same instruments, which you  
profane,  
Never sound more! when drums and trumpets shall  
I' the field prove flatterers, let courts and cities be  
Made all of false-faced soothing!  
When steel grows soft as the parasite's silk,  
Let him be made a coverture for the wars!  
No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd

40 (Stage Direction) *bare*] bareheaded.

41-46 *May these same instruments . . . coverture for the wars*] Coriolanus is deprecating the profanation of the warlike drums and trumpets by making them sound accompaniments to speeches of flattery and compliment. If these instruments of war take to playing the part of flatterers in the field of battle, we may very well expect courts and cities to be altogether given over to insincere and delusive flattery. When steel grows soft as the silk worn by the parasitic courtier, then his thin and flexible garment may serve for the uniform of war. The antecedent of "him" in line 46 seems to be "the parasite's silk," and the masculine gender is accounted for by the association of "parasite." *Coverture* is Steevens' substitution for the Folio reading *over-ture*, which might possibly mean the "prelude" or "preparation," and hence "protective equipment." But that sense is manifestly strained.

My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch,  
Which without note here's many else have done,  
You shout me forth

50

In acclamations hyperbolical;  
As if I loved my little should be dieted  
In praises sauced with lies.

COM.

Too modest are you;

More cruel to your good report than grateful  
To us that give you truly: by your patience,  
If 'gainst yourself you be incensed, we'll put you,  
Like one that means his proper harm, in manacles,  
Then reason safely with you. Therefore, be it  
known,

As to us, to all the world, that Caius Marcius  
Wears this war's garland: in token of the which,  
My noble steed, known to the camp, I give him,  
With all his trim belonging; and from this time,  
For what he did before Corioli, call him,  
With all the applause and clamour of the host,  
CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS. Bear  
The addition nobly ever!

60

[*Flourish. Trumpets sound, and drums.*]

ALL. Caius Marcius Coriolanus!

COR. I will go wash;

And when my face is fair, you shall perceive  
Whether I blush, or no: howbeit, I thank you:

70

48 or *foil'd some debile wretch*] or because I have vanquished some feeble  
wretch.

50 *You shout me forth*] You attend me with shouts.

57 *his proper harm*] his own harm, harm to his own person.



# CORIOLANUS

ACT I

I mean to stride your steed; and at all times  
To undercrest your good addition  
To the fairness of my power.

COM. So, to our tent;  
Where, ere we do repose us, we will write  
To Rome of our success. You, Titus Lartius,  
Must to Corioli back: send us to Rome  
The best, with whom we may articulate  
For their own good and ours.

LART. I shall, my lord.

COR. The gods begin to mock me. I, that now  
Refused most princely gifts, am bound to beg 80  
Of my lord general.

COM. Take't; 't is yours. What is't?

COR. I sometime lay here in Corioli  
At a poor man's house; he used me kindly:  
He cried to me; I saw him prisoner;  
But then Aufidius was within my view,  
And wrath o'erwhelm'd my pity: I request you  
To give my poor host freedom.

COM. O, well begg'd!  
Were he the butcher of my son, he should  
Be free as is the wind. Deliver him, Titus.

LART. Marcius, his name?

72-73 *To undercrest . . . power*] To wear or sustain as a crest or badge of merit the honourable title you have bestowed on me, to the best of my ability.

77 *The best . . . articulate*] The best men of Corioli, with whom we may negotiate articles of peace.

82-84 *I sometime . . . prisoner*] This incident is drawn almost verbatim from Plutarch. (See Introduction.)

'COR. By Jupiter, forgot: 90  
I am weary; yea, my memory is tired.  
Have we no wine here?  
COM. Go we to our tent:  
The blood upon your visage dries; 't is time  
It should be look'd to: come. [Exeunt.

## SCENE X — THE CAMP OF THE VOLSCES

*A flourish. Cornets. Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS, bloody, with two or three Soldiers*

AUF. The town is ta'en!

FIRST SOL. 'T will be deliver'd back on good condition.

AUF. Condition!

I would I were a Roman; for I cannot,  
Being a Volsce, be that I am. Condition!  
What good condition can a treaty find  
I' the part that is at mercy? Five times, Marcius,  
I have fought with thee; so often hast thou beat me;  
And wouldst do so, I think, should we encounter  
As often as we eat. By the elements, 10  
If e'er again I meet him beard to beard,  
He's mine, or I am his: mine emulation

2 *on good condition*] on favourable terms.

5 *be that I am*] be all that I have a mind to be; or, do that which I feel impelled to do.

12 *mine emulation*] my envy or rivalry. Cf. I, viii, 4, *supra*, where Aufidius says he abhors Coriolanus' "fame and envy."

# CORIOLANUS

ACT I

Hath not that honour in't it had; for where  
I thought to crush him in an equal force,  
True sword to sword, I'll potch at him some way,  
Or wrath or craft may get him.

FIRST SOL. He's the devil.

AUF. Bolder, though not so subtle. My valour's  
poison'd

With only suffering stain by him; for him  
Shall fly out of itself: nor sleep nor sanctuary,  
Being naked, sick, nor fane nor Capitol,  
The prayers of priests nor times of sacrifice,  
Embarquements all of fury, shall lift up  
Their rotten privilege and custom 'gainst  
My hate to Marcius: where I find him, were it  
At home, upon my brother's guard, even there,  
Against the hospitable canon, would I  
Wash my fierce hand in 's heart. Go you to the city;  
Learn how 't is held, and what they are that must  
Be hostages for Rome.

20

13 *where*] *whereas*.

15 *potch*] thrust, push violently.

17-19 *My valour's poison'd . . . of itself*] The general sense is that Aufidius' degradation at Coriolanus' hands has the effect of converting Aufidius into a cowardly assassin. His valour, he says, is poisoned by merely suffering eclipse at his rival's hands, and in order to injure his rival, his valour will take leave of its honourable quality.

20 *Being naked, sick*] Did I find Coriolanus naked and ill.

22 *Embarquements all of fury*] Embargoes on or impediments to passionate act.

25 *upon my brother's guard*] under my brother's protection.

26 *the hospitable canon*] the law of hospitality.

FIRST SOL. Will not you go?

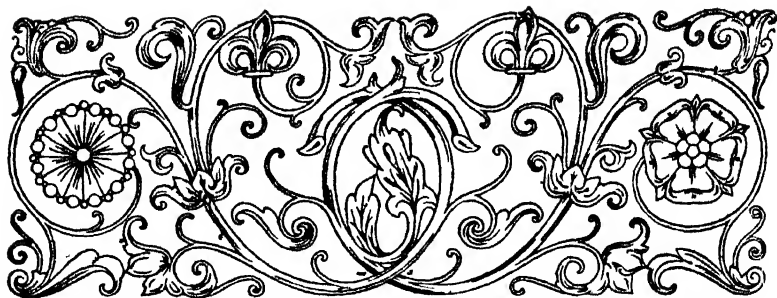
AUF. I am attended at the cypress grove: I pray  
you — 30

'Tis south the city mills — bring me word thither  
How the world goes, that to the pace of it  
I may spur on my journey.

FIRST SOL. I shall, sir. [Exeunt.]

30 *attended*] waited for. Cf. II, ii, 158, *infra*.

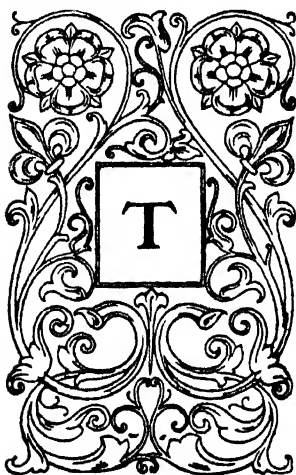
31 *the city mills*] Shakespeare was fond of inventing such local minutiae.  
Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, i, 119–120, where he specifies “the grove of sycamore That westward rooteth from the city’s side.” The dramatist may have had in mind the four corn mills on the south side of the Thames, near the Globe Theatre, which the corporation of London erected in 1588.



ACT SECOND — SCENE I — ROME

A PUBLIC PLACE

*Enter MENENIUS, with the two Tribunes of the people, SICINIUS and*  
MENENIUS  
BRUTUS



THE AUGURER TELLS ME  
we shall have news to-night.

BRU. Good or bad?

MEN. Not according to the  
prayer of the people, for they love  
not Marcius.

SIC. Nature teaches beasts to  
know their friends.

MEN. Pray you, who does the  
wolf love?

SIC. The lamb.

MEN. Ay, to devour him; as  
the hungry plebeians would the  
noble Marcius.

BRU. He's a lamb indeed, that baes like a bear. 10

MEN. He's a bear indeed, that lives like a lamb. You  
two are old men: tell me one thing that I shall ask you.

6 *who does the wolf love?*] The suggestion is that there are beasts like mobs  
who love nobody.

BOTH. Well, sir.

MEN. In what enormity is Marcius poor in, that you two have not in abundance?

BRU. He's poor in no one fault, but stored with all.

SIC. Especially in pride.

BRU. And topping all others in boasting.

MEN. This is strange now: do you two know how you are censured here in the city, I mean of us o' the right-hand file? do you?

BOTH. Why, how are we censured?

MEN. Because you talk of pride now, — will you not be angry?

BOTH. Well, well, sir, well.

MEN. Why, 't is no great matter; for a very little thief of occasion will rob you of a great deal of patience: give your dispositions the reins, and be angry at your pleasures; at the least, if you take it as a pleasure to you in being so. You blame Marcius for being proud?

BRU. We do it not alone, sir.

MEN. I know you can do very little alone; for your helps are many, or else your actions would grow wondrous single: your abilities are too infant-like for doing much alone. You talk of pride: O that you could turn

14 *In what enormity . . . in*] In what fault. The redundant duplication of the preposition is not uncommon Cf *Rom and Jul*, II, *Prol.*, 3.

"That fair *for* which love groaned *for*."

19-21 *how you are censured . . . file?*] what opinion is formed of you by us of the superior classes? Cf. I, vi, 43, *supra*: "The common *file*," i. e., the rank and file, and *Macb.*, III, i, 94: "the valued *file*" (i. e., the better classes).

34 *single*] a quibble on the two senses of the word; "one" and "weak"

your eyes toward the napes of your necks, and make *but* an interior survey of your good selves! O that you could!

BOTH. What then, sir?

MEN. Why, then you should discover a brace of unmeriting, proud; violent, testy magistrates, alias fools, as 40 any in Rome.

SIC. Menenius, you are known well enough too.

MEN. I am known to be a humorous patrician, and one that loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying Tiber in't; said to be something imperfect in favouring the first complaint, hasty and tinder-like upon too trivial motion; one that converses more with the buttock of the night than with the forehead of the morning: what I think I utter, and spend my malice in my breath.

or "feeble." Cf. 2 *Hen. IV*, I, ii, 173: "your chin double, your wit *single*."

36 *the napes of your necks*] an allusion to the vulgar notion that men bore behind them a bag in which they stowed their own faults, keeping in front of them a second bag for their neighbours' shortcomings.

43 *humorous*] capricious, whimsical.

44-45 *allaying*] mitigating or diluting. Cf. Lovelace's well-known song "To Althæa from prison" (ll. 9-10): "When flowing cups run swiftly round With no *allaying* Thames." For "allay" see V, iii, 85, *infra*

45-46 *something imperfect . . . first complaint*] showing some defect of rashness in taking the part of the first grumbler without waiting to hear another side. For *first complaint* Collier suggested *thirst complaint*.

47 *motion*] provocation.

47-48 *one that converses . . . morning*] one who stays up late rather than rises early. Cf. *L. L. L.*, V, i, 76-77: "the *posteriors* of this day which the rude multitude call the afternoon."

49 *in my breath*] in speech.

Meeting two such wealsmen as you are, — I cannot call 50  
 you *Lycurguses* — if the drink you give me touch my  
 palate adversely, I make a crooked face at it. I can't say  
 your worships have delivered the matter well, when I  
 find the ass in compound with the major part of your  
 syllables: and though I must be content to bear with  
 those that say you are reverend grave men, yet they lie  
 deadly that tell you you have good faces. If you see this  
 in the map of my microcosm, follows it that I am known

50 *wealsmen*] statesmen, men of the state or commonwealth.

51 *Lycurguses*] Lycurgus was the famous lawgiver of Sparta, whose life  
 was included by Plutarch in his collection of biographies.

52 *can't*] Theobald's correction of the Folio reading *can*.

53-55 *I find the ass . . . syllables*] Menenius' meaning is that he finds in  
 almost everything the tribunes have uttered proofs that they are asses.  
 "The ass in compound" (*i. e.*, the suffix or affix *-as* in composi-  
 tion) is a quibbling parody of the terminology of the grammar-book.  
 "Compound" is often employed in the grammatical sense of "com-  
 pound word." Cf. *Sonnet lxxvi*, 4, "*compounds strange*." The  
 prominence given in Elizabethan school-books to rules affecting the  
 uses of the syllable "as" (both in Latin and English) favoured  
 the childish pun of "as" and "ass." See *King Lear* (old play, 1605)  
 lines 2369-2371, where the innocent expression "*as for example*" is  
 misunderstood as an insulting cry of "ass." For similar jests on the  
 Latin grammar-book phrase "*as in presenti*" (*i. e.*, the termination  
*-as* in the present tense) see Nashe's *Strange Newes*, 1592 (Works,  
*ed.* McKerrow, vol I, p 282), and Marston's *What you will* (Works,  
*ed.* Bullen, vol. II, p. 360).

58 *the map of my microcosm*] the survey of my personality. The phrase  
 reflects the language of mystic philosophers who habitually describe  
 man as "a little world," an epitome of the universe. Cf. *Lear*, III, i,  
 10: "his *little world* of man," and *Jul. Cæs.*, II, i, 67-68, "the state  
 of man Like to a little kingdom."



well enough too? what harm can your bisson conspectuities glean out of this character, if I be known well enough too? 60

BRU. Come, sir, come, we know you well enough.

MEN. You know neither me, yourselves, nor any thing. You are ambitious for poor knaves' caps and legs: you wear out a good wholesome forenoon in hearing a cause between an orange-wife and a fosset-seller, and then rejourn the controversy of three-pence to a second day of audience. When you are hearing a matter between party and party, if you chance to be pinched with the colic, you make faces like mummers; set up the bloody flag against all patience; and, in roaring for a chamber-pot, dismiss the controversy bleeding, the

59-60 *bisson conspectuities*] purblind visions. *Bisson* is Theobald's correction of the unintelligible Folio reading *beesome* "Conspectuities" seems to be coined by Menenius, like "empiricutic," line 110, *infra*, and "fidiused," line 124.

63 *You are ambitious . . . legs*] You want the obeisances of poor fellows. "To make a leg" meant "to make a bow."

64-67 *you wear out . . . audience*] Shakespeare is in error in connecting the tribunes of the people with any judicial functions. The police magistrates were the prætors. The tribunes only exercised powers of protest or veto in regard to laws and regulations promulgated by the superior authorities.

65 *fosset-seller*] seller of spigots, or pegs, which formed part of the taps of beer barrels.

69 *mummers*] masquers.

69-70 *set up . . . patience*] declare downright war with patience, conduct yourselves with the utmost impatience. Cf. *Hen V*, I, ii, 101: "unwind your bloody flag."

71 *bleeding*] raw, unsettled.

more entangled by your hearing: all the peace you make in their cause is, calling both the parties knaves. You are a pair of strange ones.

BRU. Come, come, you are well understood to be a perfecter giber for the table than a necessary bencher in the Capitol.

MEN. Our very priests must become mockers, if they shall encounter such ridiculous subjects as you are. When you speak best unto the purpose, it is not worth <sup>80</sup> the wagging of your beards; and your beards deserve not so honourable a grave as to stuff a botcher's cushion, or to be entombed in an ass's pack-saddle. Yet you must be saying, Marcius is proud; who, in a cheap estimation, is worth all your predecessors since Deucalion; though peradventure some of the best of 'em were hereditary hangmen. God-den to your worships: more of your conversation would infect my brain, being the herdsmen of the beastly plebeians: I will be bold to take my leave of you. *[Brutus and Sicinius go aside.]*

*Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and VALERIA*

How now, my as fair as noble ladies, — and the moon, <sup>90</sup> were she earthly, no nobler — whither do you follow your eyes so fast?

76-77 *a necessary bencher in the Capitol]* a competent magistrate.

81 *the wagging of your beards]* the opening of your mouths.

82 *a botcher's cushion]* the pillow which was employed by a jobbing tailor when repairing clothes. Cf. Lyly's *Midas*, V, ii, 170-171: "a dozen of beards, to stuffe two dozen of cushions"

85-86 *Deucalion]* The Noah of the Deluge in classical mythology. Cf.

Ovid's *Metam.*, i, 313 *seq.*

87 *God-den]* good-evening.

VOL. Honourable Menenius, my boy Marcius approaches; for the love of Juno, let's go.

MEN. Ha! Marcius coming home?

VOL. Ay, worthy Menenius; and with most prosperous approbation.

MEN. Take my cap, Jupiter, and I thank thee. Hoo! Marcius coming home?

VIR. }  
VAL. } Nay, 't is true.

100

VOL. Look, here's a letter from him: the state hath another, his wife another; and, I think, there's one at home for you.

MEN. I will make my very house reel to-night: a letter for me?

VIR. Yes, certain, there 's a letter for you; I saw 't.

MEN. A letter for me! it gives me an estate of seven years' health; in which time I will make a lip at the physician: the most sovereign prescription in Galen is but empiricuteic, and, to this preservative, of no better report than a horse-drench. Is he not wounded? he was wont to come home wounded.

112

VIR. O, no, no, no.

VOL. O, he is wounded; I thank the gods for 't.

108 *make a lip*] make a grimace.

109 *Galen*] the great Greek physician who lived in the second century of the Christian era, some six hundred years after the date of the present history.

110 *empiricuteic*] quack medicine The word is Menenius' coinage from "empiric," cf lines 59-60, *supra*, and note.  
*to this*] compared to this

MEN. So do I too, if it be not too much: brings a' victory in his pocket? the wounds become him.

VOL. On's brows: Menenius, he comes the third time home with the oaken garland.

MEN. Has he disciplined Aufidius soundly?

VOL. Titus Lartius writes, they fought together, but Aufidius got off. 121

MEN. And 't was time for him too, I'll warrant him that: an he had stayed by him, I would not have been so fidiused for all the chests in Corioli, and the gold that's in them. Is the senate possessed of this?

VOL. Good ladies, let's go. Yes, yes, yes; the senate has letters from the general, wherein he gives my son the whole name of the war: he hath in this action outdone his former deeds doubly. 129

VAL. In troth, there's wondrous things spoke of him.

MEN. Wondrous! ay, I warrant you, and not without his true purchasing.

VIR. The gods grant them true!

VOL. True! pow, wow.

MEN. True! I'll be sworn they are true. Where is he wounded? [*To the Tribunes*] God save your good worships! Marcius is coming home: he has more cause to be proud. Where is he wounded?

VOL. I' the shoulder and i' the left arm: there will be

118 *the oaken garland*] Cf. I, iii, 14, *supra*, and note.

124 *fidiused*] a verb jocularly coined from the name "Aufidius." It means here "whipped (or beaten) as Aufidius was." Cf. lines 59-60, *supra*, and note.

125 *possessed*] fully informed.

128 *the whole name*] the whole credit.

large cicatrices to show the people, when he shall stand for his place. He received in the repulse of Tarquin seven hurts i' the body.

MEN. One i' the neck, and two i' the thigh; there's nine that I know.

VOL. He had, 'before this last expedition, twenty five wounds upon him.

MEN. Now it's twenty seven: every gash was an enemy's grave. [*A shout and flourish.*] Hark! the trumpets.

VOL. These are the ushers of Marcius: before him He carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears: 150  
Death, that dark spirit, in 's nerry arm doth lie;  
Which, being advanced, declines, and then men die.

*A sennet. Trumpets sound. Enter COMINIUS and TITUS LARTIUS; between them, CORIOLANUS, crowned with an oaken garland; with Captains and Soldiers, and a Herald*

HER. Know, Rome, that all alone Marcius did fight

141 [*for his place*] for the consulship. Volumnia takes for granted that he has won his right to candidature for the office.

143-144 [*there's nine that I know*] Menenius counts in silence after enumerating the second wound, and then announces a total of nine wounds within his knowledge.

151 [*nerry*] sinewy.

152 [*Which, being advanced*] Which, being merely raised up and let fall, causes men to die.

152 (Stage Direction) *A sennet*] A note on the trumpet, announcing the entry of a distinguished person.

*Titus Lartius*] This character was ordered to Corioli, I, ix, 75-76,

Within Corioli gates: where he hath won,  
With fame, a name to Caius Marcius; these  
In honour follows Coriolanus.

Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus! [*Flourish.*]

ALL. Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

COR. No more of this, it does offend my heart;

Pray now, no more.

COM. Look, sir, your mother!

COR. O, 160

You have, I know, petition'd all the gods

For my prosperity! [*Kneels.*]

VOL. Nay, my good soldier, up;

My gentle Marcius, worthy Caius, and

By deed-achieving honour newly named, —

What is it? — Coriolanus must I call thee? —

But, O, thy wife!

COR. My gracious silence, hail!

Wouldst thou have laugh'd had I come coffin'd home,

That weep'st to see me triumph? Ah, my dear,

Such eyes the widows in Corioli wear,

And mothers that lack sons.

MEN. Now, the gods crown thee!

COR. And live you yet? [*To Valeria*] O my sweet  
lady, pardon. 171

---

*supra*, and is sent for thence, II, ii, 35-36, *infra*, so that he could not have been in Rome on the occasion of Coriolanus' triumph. His name seems mentioned in error. No word is allotted him in this scene.

155 *a name to*] a name in addition to.

166 *My gracious silence, hail!*] The hero half ironically compliments his gentle wife on her tearful silence.

VOL. I know not where to turn: O, welcome home:  
And welcome, general: and ye're welcome all.

MEN. A hundred thousand welcomes. I could weep,  
And I could laugh; I am light and heavy. Welcome:  
A curse begin at very root on's heart,  
That is not glad to see thee! You are three  
That Rome should dote on: yet, by the faith of men,  
We have some old crab-trees here at home that will  
not

Be grafted to your relish. Yet welcome, warriors: 180  
We call a nettle but a nettle, and  
The faults of fools but folly.

COM. Ever right.

COR. Menenius, ever, ever.

HER. Give way there, and go on.

COR. [*To Volumnia and Virgilia*] Your hand, and yours:  
Ere in our own house I do shade my head,  
The good patricians must be visited;  
From whom I have received not only greetings,  
But with them change of honours.

VOL. I have lived  
To see inherited my very wishes  
And the buildings of my fancy: only 190  
There's one thing wanting, which I doubt not but  
Our Rome will cast upon thee.

COR. Know, good mother,

---

183 *Menenius, ever, ever*] Menenius is still the same frank old friend that he always was.

188 *with them change of honours*] with the greetings varieties of honours. Theobald proposed to substitute *charge* (*i. e.*, responsibility) for *change*.

I had rather be their servant in my way  
Than sway with them in theirs.

COM.

On, to the Capitol!

[*Flourish. Cornets. Exeunt in state, as before  
Brutus and Sicinius come forward.*]

BRU. All tongues speak of him, and the bleared sights  
Are spectacted to see him: your prattling nurse  
Into a rapture lets her baby cry  
While she chats him: the kitchen malkin pins  
Her richest lockram 'bout her reechy neck,  
Clambering the walls to eye him: stalls, bulks, windows,  
Are smother'd up, leads fill'd and ridges horsed 201  
With variable complexions, all agreeing  
In earnestness to see him: seld-shown flamens  
Do press among the popular throngs, and puff  
To win a vulgar station: our veil'd dames

197 *rapture*] seizure or paroxysm.

198 *chats him*] makes Coriolanus the subject of her chat.

*kitchen malkin*] kitchen slut or slattern. "Malkin" is properly the diminutive of "Mall" or "Mary."

199 *lockram . . . reechy*] cheap linen . . . reeking, greasy.

200 *bulks*] boards or ledges fastened to the outside of a house, on which articles were offered for sale.

201-202 *ridges horsed . . . complexions*] roof-tops ridden astride by men and women of all sorts and conditions.

203 *seld-shown flamens*] priests who seldom appear in public.

205 *a vulgar station*] a place among the common people.

205-208 *our veil'd dames . . . burning kisses*] a stilted way of saying that the women risk letting their pink and white complexions be spoiled by sunburn. Woman's cheeks were commonly credited by Elizabethan poets with being the battleground of white and red colours. Cf. *T. of Shrew*, IV, v, 30: "Such war of white and red within her cheek."



Commit the war of white and damask in  
 Their nicely-gawded cheeks to the wanton spoil  
 Of Phœbus' burning kisses: such a pother,  
 As if that whatsoever god who leads him  
 Were *slily crept*, into his human powers, 210  
 And gave him graceful posture.

SIC. On the sudden,  
 I warrant him consul.

BRU. Then our office may,  
 During his power, go sleep.

SIC. He cannot temperately transport his honours  
 From where he should begin and end, but will  
 Lose those he hath won.

BRU. In that there's comfort.

SIC. Doubt not  
 The commoners, for whom we stand, but they  
 Upon their ancient malice will forget  
 With the least cause these his new honours; which

207 *nicely-gawded*] prettily ornamented.

209 *whatsoever god*] the god whoever he be; an allusion to the demon or guardian angel who was commonly reckoned to find a home in each man's soul and to direct his conduct. In *Ant. and Cleop.*, II, iii, 20-22, this influence which is assumed to control Antony is called both his "demon" and his "angel."

214-216 *He cannot . . . won*] He cannot moderately proceed through the progressive grades of honour from the first stage to the last, but will sacrifice by his impetuosity the honours he gains by the way. For the construction "From where . . . end" cf *Cymb.*, III, ii, 62-63: "from our hence-going And our return [*sc.* hither]."

218 *Upon their ancient malice*] Owing to their old hatred.

219-221 *which That . . . to do 't*] and make no question but that he will

That he will give them make I as little question 220  
As he is proud to do 't.

BRU. I heard him swear,  
Were he to stand for consul, never would he  
Appear i' the market-place, nor on him put  
The napless vesture of humility,  
Nor showing, as the manner is, his wounds  
To the people, beg their stinking breaths.

SIC. 'Tis right.

BRU. It was his word: O, he would miss it rather  
Than carry it but by the suit of the gentry to him,  
And the desire of the nobles.

SIC. I wish no better  
Than have him hold that purpose and to put it 230  
In execution.

BRU. 'Tis most like he will.

SIC. It shall be to him then, as our good wills,  
A sure destruction.

BRU. So it must fall out  
To him or our authorities. For an end,  
We must suggest the people in what hatred

give the people reason (for forgetting his new honours), and that he  
will feel pride in provoking their forgetfulness.

224 *The napless vesture of humility*] The poor threadbare garment of  
humility, which candidates for office in Republican Rome were com-  
pelled to wear. *Napless* is Rowe's correction of the unintelligible  
misprint *Naples*. Cf. II, iii, 112, *infra*: "this woolvish toge," and  
note.

226 *breaths*] suffrages, votes.

232-233 *It shall be . . . sure destruction*] It shall be to him then, as our  
best wishes would have it, certain ruin.

235 *suggest*] prompt.

He still hath held them; that to 's power he would  
 Have made them mules, silenced their pleaders and  
 Disproportioned their freedoms; holding them,  
 In human action and capacity,  
 Of no more soul nor fitness for the world 240  
 Than camels in the war, who have their provand  
 Only for bearing burthens, and sore blows  
 For sinking under them.

SIC. This, as you say, suggested  
 At some time when his soaring insolence  
 Shall touch the people — which time shall not want,  
 If he be put upon 't; and that 's as easy  
 As to set dogs on sheep — will be his fire  
 To kindle their dry stubble; and their blaze  
 Shall darken him for ever.

*Enter a Messenger*

BRU. What 's the matter?

MESS. You are sent for to the Capitol. 'T is thought  
 That Marcius shall be consul: 251

236 *to 's power*] as far as his power went.

238 *Disproportioned their freedoms*] Dispossessed, or deprived, them of their liberties.

240 *Of no more soul . . . world*] Of no more intelligent feeling nor use in the world.

241 *provand*] an exceptional form of "provender."

245 *touch*] Hanmer's change for the Folio reading *teach*. Pope read *reach*. "Teach the people" might possibly mean "Put them in the appropriate frame of mind."

246 *put upon 't*] roused to anger.

247 *his fire*] as a fire lighted by himself.

I have seen the dumb men throng to see him and  
The blind to hear him speak: matrons flung gloves,  
Ladies and maids their scarfs and handkerchers,  
Upon him as he pass'd: the nobles bended,  
As to Jove's statue, and the commons made  
A shower and thunder with their caps and shouts:  
I never saw the like.

BRU.                      Let 's to the Capitol,  
And carry with us ears and eyes for the time,  
But hearts for the event.

SIC.                      Have with you.                      [*Exeunt.* 280]

## SCENE II — THE SAME

## THE CAPITOL

*Enter two Officers, to lay cushions*

FIRST OFF. Come, come, they are almost here.  
How many stand for consulships?

SEC. OFF. Three, they say: but 't is thought of  
every one Coriolanus will carry it.

FIRST OFF. That 's a brave fellow; but he 's ven-  
geance proud, and loves not the common people.

257 *with their caps*] by flinging up their caps which came down shower-  
wise.

259-260 *carry with us . . . event*] keep our eyes and ears open for all  
that is passing and keep our hearts resolute in regard to the issue.

260 *Have with you*] Get along.

5-6 *he's vengeance proud*] he's proud with a vengeance, excessively proud.

SEC. OFF. Faith, there have been many great men that have flattered the people, who ne'er loved them; and there be many that they have loved, they know not wherefore: so that, if they love they know not why, 10 they hate upon no better a ground: therefore, for Coriolanus neither to care whether they love or hate him manifests the true knowledge he has in their disposition; and out of his noble carelessness lets them plainly see 't.

FIRST OFF. If he did not care whether he had their love or no, he waved indifferently 'twixt doing them neither good nor harm: but he seeks their hate with greater devotion than they can render it him, and leaves nothing undone that may fully discover him their opposite. Now, to seem to affect the malice and displeasure 20 of the people is as bad as that which he dislikes, to flatter them for their love.

SEC. OFF. He hath deserved worthily of his country: and his ascent is not by such easy degrees as those who, having been supple and courteous to the people, bon-

16 *he waved indifferently*] he would have been quite neutral; he would have shown indifference.

18 *devotion*] earnestness.

19 *opposite*] enemy, opponent.

20 *affect*] attract, pursue.

24 *by such easy degrees as those*] by such easy stages as the ascent of those.

25-27 *bonneted . . . estimation*] took off their caps (to the people) and so won their way into the people's estimation and repute, without doing anything else to get into their favour or regard.

neted, without any further deed to have them at all into their estimation and report: but he hath so planted his honours in their eyes and his actions in their hearts, that for their tongues to be silent and not confess so much, were a kind of ingrateful injury; to report otherwise <sup>30</sup> were a malice that, giving itself the lie, would pluck reproof and rebuke from every ear that heard it.

FIRST OFF. No more of him; he 's a worthy man: make way, they are coming.

*A sennet. Enter, with Lictors before them, COMINIUS the Consul, MENENIUS, CORIOLANUS, Senators, SICINIUS and BRUTUS. The Senators take their places; the Tribunes take their places by themselves. CORIOLANUS stands*

MEN. Having determined of the Volsces and To send for Titus Lartius, it remains, As the main point of this our after-meeting, To gratify his noble service that Hath thus stood for his country: therefore, please you,

Most reverend and grave elders, to desire 40  
The present consul, and last general  
In our well-found successes, to report  
A little of that worthy work perform'd  
By Caius Marcius Coriolanus; whom  
We met here, both to thank and to remember  
With honours like himself.

45-46 to remember With honours like himself] to commemorate with honours proportionate to his merits.

FIRST SEN. Speak, good Cominius:  
 Leave nothing out for length, and make us think  
 Rather our state 's defective for requital  
 Than we to stretch it out. [*To the Tribunes*] Masters o'  
 the people,  
 We do request your kindest ears, and after, 50  
 Your loving motion toward the common body,  
 To yield what passes here.

SIC. We are convented  
 Upon a pleasing treaty, and have hearts  
 Inclunable to honour and advance  
 The theme of our assembly.

BRU. Which the rather  
 We shall be bless'd to do, if he remember  
 A kinder value of the people than  
 He hath hereto prized them at.

MEN. That 's off, that 's off;  
 I would you rather had been silent. Please you  
 To hear Cominius speak?

BRU. Most willingly: 60  
 But yet my caution was more pertinent  
 Than the rebuke you give it.

47-49 *make us think . . . stretch it out*] make us think that the republic  
 is rather too niggardly in rewarding his service than suppose us to  
 exaggerate the merits of his service

50 *your kindest ears*] your most favourable attention.

51 *Your loving . . . body*] Your kind interposition with the populace.

52 *yield*] announce.

*convented*] convened.

56 *bless'd to do*] happy in doing.

58 *prized*] valued.

*That's off*] That's off the point, irrelevant.

MEN. He loves your people;  
But tie him not to be their bedfellow.  
Worthy Cominius, speak. [*Coriolanus offers to go away.*]  
Nay, keep your place.

FIRST SEN. Sit, Coriolanus; never shame to hear  
What you have nobly done.

COR. Your honours' pardon:  
I had rather have my wounds to heal again,  
Than hear say how I got them.

BRU. Sir, I hope  
My words disbench'd you not.

COR. No, sir: yet oft,  
When blows have made me stay, I fled from words. 70  
You sooth'd not, therefore hurt not: but your people,  
I love them as they weigh.

MEN. Pray now, sit down.

COR. I had rather have one scratch my head i' the  
sun  
When the alarum were struck than idly sit  
To hear my nothings monster'd. [*Exit.*]

MEN. Masters of the people,  
Your multiplying spawn how can he flatter —  
That's thousand to one good one — when you now see  
He had rather venture all his limbs for honour  
Than one on's ears to hear it? Proceed, Cominius.

69 *disbench'd you*] caused you to leave your seat or bench.

71 *sooth'd*] flattered.

72 *weigh*] merit.

75 *monster'd*] grossly exaggerated.

77 *That's thousand . . . one*] There is but one good man in a thousand  
of such riffraff.



COM. *I shall lack voice: the deeds of Coriolanus* 80  
 Should not be utter'd feebly. It is held  
 That valour is the chiefest virtue and  
 Most dignifies the haver: if it be,  
 The man I speak of cannot in the world  
 Be singly counterpoised. At sixteen years,  
 When Tarquin made a head for Rome, he fought  
 Beyond the mark of others: our then dictator,  
 Whom with all praise I point at, saw him fight,  
 When with his Amazonian chin he drove  
 The bristled lips before him: he bestrid 90<sup>6</sup>  
 An o'er-press'd Roman, and i' the consul's view  
 Slew three opposers: Tarquin's self he met,  
 And struck him on his knee: in that day's feats,  
 When he might act the woman in the scene,  
 He proved best man i' the field, and for his meed  
 Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age

86 *made a head for Rome*] raised an army to reconquer Rome.

87 *our then dictator*] Vague hints of Plutarch are followed here: "Marcius valiantly fought in the sight of the Dictator." The dictator is not identified by Plutarch. According to Livy, Titus Lartius was the first Roman to be made dictator. He was appointed during the war with the Tarquins.

89 *Amazonian chin*] beardless chin.

90 *bestrid*] saved a man's life in battle by standing astride of him. It was always reckoned one of the most honourable of services. Cf. *Macb.*, IV, iii, 4: "like good men *Bestride* our down-fall'n birthdom."

93 *struck him on his knee*] with a sudden blow brought him to his knee.

94 *When he might act the woman*] a reference to the practice of boys taking women's parts on the contemporary stage.

96 *brow-bound with the oak*] See note on I, iii, 14, *supra*.

96-97 *His pupil age Man-enter'd thus*] The general sense is that his

Man-enter'd thus, he waxed like a sea;  
 And, in the brunt of seventeen battles since,  
 He lurch'd all swords of the garland. For this last,  
 Before and in Corioli, let me say, 100  
 I cannot speak him home: he stopp'd the fliers;  
 And by his rare example made the coward  
 Turn terror into sport: as weeds before  
 A vessel under sail, so men obey'd,  
 And fell below his stem: his sword, death's stamp,  
 Where it did mark, it took; from face to foot  
 He was a thing of blood, whose every motion  
 Was timed with dying cries: alone he enter'd

minority was distinguished by all the virtues and valour of manhood.  
 "Pupil age" though written as two words is equivalent to "pupilage,"  
*i. e.*, minority, or boyhood. The compound "Man-enter'd" means  
 "initiated in manhood", "entered" is used in much the same sense,  
 I, i, 2, *supra*: "they of Rome are *enter'd* in our counsels."

99 *He lurch'd all swords of the garland*] Cf. Ben Jonson's *Silent Woman*,  
 V, iv, 227: "You have *lurch'd* [*i. e.*, deprived, cheated] your friends of  
 the better halfe of the garland." "Lurch" was a term familiar to  
 card-players and card-sharpers, and connoted great rapidity in the  
 deceptive operation. There was a card game so called, and the  
 word was often applied to a victory in any set or rubber in which no  
 points were scored by the adversary.

103 *weeds*] Thus the First Folio, for which later Folios substitute *waves*.  
 "Weeds" confuses the metaphor, but may well be retained, since it  
 emphasises the feebleness of Coriolanus' enemy

105 *his sword, death's stamp*] the instrument with which death sealed or  
 stamped men for its own.

106 *Where it did mark, it took*] It took effect wherever it touched.

107-108 *every motion . . . cries*] the cries of the slaughtered followed his  
 movement with the regularity with which a dancer keeps time to the  
 music.

The mortal gate of the city, which he painted  
 With shunless destiny; aidless came off, 110  
 And with a sudden re-enforcement struck  
 Corioli like a planet: now all 's his:  
 When, by and by, the din of war gan pierce  
 His ready sense; then straight his doubled spirit  
 Re-quicken'd what in flesh was fatigate,  
 And to the battle came he; where he did  
 Run reeking o'er the lives of men, as if  
 'T were a perpetual spoil: and till we call'd  
 Both field and city ours, he never stood  
 To ease his breast with panting.

MEN. Worthy man! 120

FIRST SEN. He cannot but with measure fit the  
 honours

Which we devise him.

Com. Our spoils he kick'd at,  
 And look'd upon things precious, as they were  
 The common muck of the world: he covets less  
 Than misery itself would give; rewards

109-110 *The mortal gate . . . destiny*] The gate of the city doomed to destruction, which he covered with the blood of those destined to death without chance of escape.

111-112 *struck Corioli like a planet*] an allusion to the sudden fatalities ascribed to planetary influence. Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, IV, iii, 108: "Be as a planetary plague," and *Tit. And.*, II, iv, 14: "some planet strike me down."

115 *fatigate*] wearied out.

121 *with measure*] with propriety, competently.

122 *kick'd at*] spurned.

125 *misery*] parsimony, avarice. The word is formed from "miser."

His deeds with doing them, and is content  
To spend the time to end it.

MEN. He 's right noble:  
Let him be call'd for.

FIRST SEN. Call Coriolanus. .

OFF. He doth appear.

*Re-enter CORIOLANUS*

MEN. The senate, Coriolanus, are well pleased 150  
To make thee consul.

COR. I do owe them still  
My life and services.

MEN. It then remains  
That you do speak to the people.

COR. I do beseech you,  
Let me o'erleap that custom, for I cannot  
Put on the gown, stand naked, and entreat them,  
For my wounds' sake, to give their suffrage: please you  
That I may pass this doing.

SIC. Sir, the people

127 *To spend . . . to end it*] To spend the time in doing great  
acts for their own sake and not for the sake of future reward.  
"To end" has the sense of "to finish up altogether," "to have done  
with."

134-135 *that custom . . . entreat them*] according to North's rendering of  
Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus*: "it was the custome of Rome at that  
time, that such as dyd sue for any office, should for certen dayes before  
be in the market-place, only with a *poor gowne on their backes*, and  
*without any coate underneath*, to praye the people to remember them  
at the day of election."

137 *pass this doing*] omit this action.

# CORIOLANUS

## ACT II

Must have their voices; neither will they bate  
One jot of ceremony.

MEN. Put them not to 't:  
Pray you, go fit you to the custom, and 140  
Take to you, as your predecessors have,  
Your honour with your form.

COR. It is a part  
That I shall blush in acting, and might well  
Be taken from the people.

BRU. Mark you that?

COR. To brag unto them, thus I did, and thus;  
Show them the unaching scars which I should hide,  
As if I had received them for the hire  
Of their breath only!

MEN. Do not stand upon 't.  
We recommend to you, tribunes of the people,  
Our purpose to them: and to our noble consul 150  
Wish we all joy and honour.

SENATORS. To Coriolanus come all joy and honour!

*[Flourish of cornets. Exeunt all but Sicinius and Brutus.]*

BRU. You see how he intends to use the people.

SIC. May they perceive's intent! He will require them,

138 *have their voices*] exercise their votes. The term "voice" was invariably used for "vote" by Shakespeare.

139 *Put them not to 't*] Do not rouse their anger.

142 *with your form*] in the manner prescribed for you by tradition.

148 *Do not stand upon 't*] Do not be obstinate

149-150 *We recommend . . . to them*] We ask you tribunes of the people to recommend to the plebeians for their approbation what we are proposing to them, *viz.*, Coriolanus' appointment to the consulship.

154-156 *He will require . . . to give*] He will make demand of them, as

As if he did contemn what he requested  
Should be in them to give.

BRU. Come, we'll inform them  
Of our proceedings here: on the market-place,  
I know, they do attend us. [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE III — THE SAME

## THE FORUM

*Enter seven or eight Citizens*

FIRST CIT. Once, if he do require our voices, we  
ought not to deny him.

SEC. CIT. We may, sir, if we will.

THIRD CIT. We have power in ourselves to do it, but  
it is a power that we have no power to do: for if he  
show us his wounds and tell us his deeds, we are to put  
our tongues into those wounds and speak for them; so,  
if he tell us his noble deeds, we must also tell him our  
noble acceptance of them. Ingratitude is monstrous:  
and for the multitude to be ingrateful, were to make a 10  
monster of the multitude; of the which we being mem-  
bers, should bring ourselves to be monstrous members.

FIRST CIT. And to make us no better thought of, a  
little help will serve; for once we stood up about the

---

if he scorned the fact that it should be in their power to give him what  
he requested.

158 *attend*] wait for. Cf. I, x, 30, *supra*.

1 *Once*] Once for all, in a word.

5 *it is a power . . . power to do*] it is a natural power that we have no  
moral right to exercise. "Power" is used in two different senses.

14 *once we stood up*] no sooner did we stand up (than).

corn, he himself stuck not to call us the many-headed multitude.

THIRD CIT. *We have been called so of many; not that our heads are some brown, some black, some auburn, some bald, but that our wits are so diversely coloured: and truly I think, if all our wits were to issue out of one skull, they would fly east, west, north, south, and their consent of one direct way should be at once to all the points o' the compass.*

SEC. CIT. Think you so? Which way do you judge my wit would fly?

THIRD CIT. Nay, your wit will not so soon out as another man's will; 't is strongly wedged up in a block-head; but if it were at liberty, 't would, sure, southward.

SEC. CIT. Why that way?

THIRD CIT. To lose itself in a fog; where being three parts melted away with rotten dews, the fourth would return for conscience sake, to help to get thee a wife.

SEC. CIT. You are never without your tricks: you may, you may.

THIRD CIT. Are you all resolved to give your voices? But that's no matter, the greater part carries it. I say, if he would incline to the people, there was never a worthier man.

18 *auburn*] Thus the Fourth Folio. The earlier Folios read *Abram*, an old spelling of the same word. "Abraham (or Abram) coloured" usually means "flaxen"

28 *southward*] The south wind is invariably described by Shakespeare as bringing fog and rain Cf. I, iv, 30, *supra*, and *As you like it*, III, v, 50: "Like foggy south, puffing with wind and rain."

33-34 *you may, you may*] please go on; used ironically.

*Enter CORIOLANUS in a gown of humility, with MENENIUS*

Here he comes, and in the gown of humility: mark his behaviour. We are not to stay all together, but to come <sup>40</sup> by him where he stands, by ones, by twos, and by threes. He's to make his requests by particulars; wherein every one of us has a single honour, in giving him our own voices with our own tongues: therefore follow me, and I'll direct you how you shall go by him.

ALL. Content, content. *[Exeunt Citizens.]*

MEN. O sir, you are not right: have you not known The worthiest men have done 't?

COR. What must I say? —  
"I pray, sir," — Plague upon 't! I cannot bring  
My tongue to such a pace. "Look, sir, my wounds! <sup>50</sup>  
I got them in my country's service, when  
Some certain of your brethren roar'd, and ran  
From the noise of our own drums."

MEN. O me, the gods!  
You must not speak of that: you must desire them  
To think upon you.

COR. Think upon me! hang 'em!  
I would they would forget me, like the virtues  
Which our divines lose by 'em.

MEN. You 'll mar all:  
I 'll leave you: pray you, speak to 'em, I pray you,  
In wholesome manner. *[Exit.]*

COR. Bid them wash their faces,

<sup>42</sup> *by particulars*] addressing each of us individually.

<sup>55</sup> *To think upon you*] To think well of you.

<sup>56-57</sup> *like the virtues . . . by 'em*] As they forget the virtuous teachings  
which our divines waste on them, or lose their time by preaching to them.



And keep their teeth clean. [*Re-enter two of the Citizens.*] So,  
here comes a brace.

60

*Re-enter a third Citizen*

You know the cause, sir, of my standing here.

THIRD CIT. We do, sir; tell us what hath brought  
you to 't.

COR. Mine own desert.

SEC. CIT. Your own desert!

COR. Ay, but not mine own desire.

THIRD CIT. How! not your own desire!

COR. No, sir, 't was never my desire yet to trouble  
the poor with begging.

THIRD CIT. You must think, if we give you any thing, 70  
we hope to gain by you.

COR. Well then, I pray, your price o' the consul-  
ship?

FIRST CIT. The price is, to ask it kindly.

COR. Kindly! Sir, I pray, let me ha' 't: I have  
wounds to show you, which shall be yours in private.  
Your good voice, sir; what say you?

SEC. CIT. You shall ha' 't, worthy sir.

COR. A match, sir. There 's in all two worthy voices  
begged. I have your alms: adieu.

60-61 (Stage Directions) *Re-enter two of the Citizens . . . Re-enter a third Citizen*] Thus the Cambridge editors. The Folios here have only the single stage direction, *Enter three of the Citizens* But Coriolanus specifies the entry in the first instance of only "a brace." Hence the change.

66 *Ay, but not mine*] The First Folio erroneously omits *not*. The other Folios (substantially) omit *but*. The presence of the two words improves the sense.

THIRD CIT. But this is something odd.

80

SEC. CIT. An 't were to give again, — but 't is no matter.

[*Exeunt the three Citizens.*]

*Re-enter two other Citizens*

COR. Pray you now, if it may stand with the tune of your voices that I may be consul, I have here the customary gown.

FOURTH CIT. You have deserved nobly of your country, and you have not deserved nobly.

COR. Your enigma?

FOURTH CIT. You have been a scourge to her enemies, you have been a rod to her friends; you have not indeed loved the common people.

90

COR. You should account me the more virtuous, that I have not been common in my love. I will, sir, flatter my sworn brother, the people, to earn a dearer estimation of them; 't is a condition they account gentle: and since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat than my heart, I will practise the insinuating nod, and be off to them most counterfeitley; that is, sir, I will counterfeit the bewitchment of some popular man, and

93 *sworn brother*] bosom friend, comrade in adventurous enterprise, a reference to the mediæval institution of "fratres jurati," men bound by oath to share together chivalric adventures Cf. *Rich. II.*, V, i, 20-21: "I am *sworn brother* . . . To grim Necessity "

93-94 *to earn . . . of them*] to earn of them a higher opinion.

94 *a condition*] the sort of behaviour.

97 *be off to them most counterfeitley*] take my hat off to them with a pretence of real feeling

98 *bewitchment*] bewitching address Cf. *Hen VIII.*, III, ii, 18-19. "he hath a *witchcraft* . . . in 's tongue "

give it bountiful to the desirers. Therefore, beseech you,  
I may be consul. 100

FIFTH CIT. We hope to find you our friend; and  
therefore give you our voices heartily.

FOURTH CIT. You have received many wounds for  
your country.

COR. I will not seal your knowledge with showing  
them. I will make much of your voices, and so trouble  
you no farther.

BOTH CIT. The gods give you joy, sir, heartily!

COR. Most sweet voices! [Exeunt. 110

Better it is to die, better to starve,  
Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.  
Why in this woolvish toge should I stand here,  
To beg of Hob and Dick that do appear,  
Their needless vouches? Custom calls me to 't:

105 *seal*] complete, give the final touch to.

110 *starve*] Thus the Fourth Folio. The earlier Folios give the old form *sterve*, which the rhyme with *deserve* seems to require.

112 *toge*] Thus Steevens and Malone. The First Folio reads *tongue*; the later Folios *gowne*. "Toge" (*i.e.*, toga) is doubtless right. Cf. *Othello*, I, i, 25, where the correct Quarto reading "the *toged* consuls" is misprinted by the Folio "the *tongued* consuls." The candidate's robe or toga was usually made of white lambskin. It is called "napless vesture," II, i, 224, *supra*. The significance of "wolfish" is therefore difficult. It may suggest that Coriolanus conceals a wolf's ferocity under his lambskin robe, or more probably the word may be loosely used for "crude" or "rough." The emendation *woolless* has little to recommend it.

113 *Hob and Dick*] common names of country bumpkins.

114 *vouches*] voices, votes.

What custom wills, in all things should we do't,  
 The dust on antique time would lie unswept,  
 And mountainous error be too highly heap'd  
 For truth to o'er-peer. Rather than fool it so,  
 Let the high office and the honour go  
 To one that would do thus. I am half through: 120  
 The one part suffer'd, the other will I do.

*Re-enter three Citizens more*

Here come more voices.

Your voices: for your voices I have fought;  
 Watch'd for your voices; for your voices bear  
 Of wounds two dozen odd; battles thrice six  
 I have seen, and heard of; for your voices have  
 Done many things, some less, some more: your voices:  
 Indeed, I would be consul.

SIXTH CIT. He has done nobly, and cannot go without  
 any honest man's voice. 130

SEVENTH CIT. Therefore let him be consul: the gods  
 give him joy, and make him good friend to the people!

ALL. Amen, amen. God save thee, noble consul!

*[Exeunt.]*

COR. Worthy voices!

*Re-enter MENENIUS, with BRUTUS and SICINIUS*

MEN. You have stood your limitation; and the  
 tribunes

122 *more*] an archaic form of "more."

126 *heard of*] The speaker is in an ironical mood. He means that he has heard some such talk as that. Cf. II, ii, 98, *supra*, where Cominius credits Coriolanus with "seventeen" (and not "thrice six," *i. e.*, eighteen) battles.

135-136 *You have stood your limitation . . . people's voice*] You have

# CORIOLANUS

## ACT II

Endue you with the people's voice: remains  
That in the official marks invested you  
Anon do meet the senate.

COR. Is this done?

SIC. The custom of request you have discharged:  
The people do 'admit you, and are summon'd 140  
To meet anon upon your approbation.

COR. Where? at the senate-house?

SIC. There, Coriolanus.

COR. May I change these garments?

SIC. You may, sir.

COR. That I'll straight do, and, knowing myself  
again,

Repair to the senate-house.

MEN. I'll keep you company. Will you along?

BRU. We stay here for the people.

SIC. Fare you well.

*[Exeunt Coriolanus and Menenius.]*

He has it now; and, by his looks, methinks  
'T is warm at 's heart.

BRU. With a proud heart he wore  
His humble weeds. Will you dismiss the people? 150

*Re-enter Citizens*

SIC. How now, my masters! have you chose this  
man?

FIRST CIT. He has our voices, sir.

stood your appointed time, and the tribunes invest you with what the  
people have voted you.

137 *the official marks]* the distinctive badges of office.

149 *'T is warm at 's heart]* It is comforting to his heart.

BRU. We pray the gods he may deserve your loves.

SEC. CIT. Amen, sir: to my poor unworthy notice,  
He mock'd us when he begg'd our voices.

THIRD CIT. Certainly  
He flouted us downright.

FIRST CIT. No, 't is his kind of speech; he did not  
mock us.

SEC. CIT. Not one amongst us, save yourself, but  
says

He used us scornfully: he should have show'd us  
His marks of merit, wounds received for 's country. 160

SIC. Why, so he did, I am sure.

CITIZENS. No, no; no man saw 'em.

THIRD CIT. He said he had wounds which he could  
show in private;

And with his hat, thus waving it in scorn,  
"I would be consul," says he: "aged custom,  
But by your voices, will not so permit me;  
Your voices therefore." When we granted that,  
Here was "I thank you for your voices: thank you:  
Your most sweet voices: now you have left your voices,  
I have no further with you." Was not this mockery? 170

SIC. Why, either were you ignorant to see 't,  
Or, seeing it, of such childish friendliness  
To yield your voices?

BRU. Could you not have told him,

---

165 *aged custom*] Shakespeare seems to have overlooked the fact that  
the consular election was really an innovation after the very recent  
expulsion of the kings

171 *were you ignorant to see 't*] you lacked the knowledge or intelligence  
to discern it.

# CORIOLANUS

## ACT II

As you were lesson'd, when he had no power,  
 But was a petty servant to the state,  
 He was your enemy; ever spake against  
 Your liberties and the charters that you bear  
 I' the body of the weal: and now, arriving  
 A place of potency and sway o' the state,  
 If he should still malignantly remain 180  
 Fast foe to the plebeii, your voices might  
 Be curses to yourselves? You should have said,  
 That as his worthy deeds did claim no less  
 Than what he stood for, so his gracious nature  
 Would think upon you for your voices, and  
 Translate his malice towards you into love,  
 Standing your friendly lord.

Sic. Thus to have said,  
 As you were fore-advised, had touch'd his spirit  
 And tried his inclination; from him pluck'd  
 Either his gracious promise, which you might, 190  
 As cause had call'd you up, have held him to;  
 Or else it would have gall'd his surly nature,  
 Which easily endures not article  
 Tying him to aught: so, putting him to rage,  
 You should have ta'en the advantage of his choler,  
 And pass'd him unelected.

---

174 *lesson'd*] instructed.

178 *arriving*] reaching. The usage is common.

185 *think upon you for your voices*] retain grateful remembrance of you  
 for your votes.

188 *touch'd*] tested as with the touchstone.

193-194 *endures not . . . to aught*] does not submit to any binding  
 terms.

BRU. Did you perceive  
 He did solicit you in free contempt  
 When he did need your loves; and do you think  
 That his contempt shall not be bruising to you 199  
 When he hath power to crush? Why, had your bodies  
 No heart among you? or had you tongues to cry  
 Against the rectorship of judgement?

SIC. Have you,  
 Ere now, denied the asker? and now again,  
 Of him that did not ask but mock, bestow  
 Your sued-for tongues?

THIRD CIT. He's not confirm'd; we may deny him yet.

SEC. CIT. And will deny him:  
 I'll have five hundred voices of that sound.

FIRST CIT. I twice-five hundred, and their friends to  
 piece 'em. 209

BRU. Get you hence instantly, and tell those friends,  
 They have chose a consul that will from them take  
 Their liberties, make them of no more voice  
 Than dogs that are as often beat for barking,  
 As therefore kept to do so.

SIC. Let them assemble;  
 And, on a safer judgement, all revoke

197 *free contempt*] unrestrained scorn.

201-202 *or had you tongues . . . of judgement*] or can it be that your  
 tongues express themselves in opposition to the rule of judgment?  
 did you vote against your better judgment?

205 *Your sued-for tongues*] The votes which should have been solicited  
 of you.

209 *to piece 'em*] to add to them, strengthen them.

214 *As therefore kept to do so*] As kept for the very purpose of doing so.



# CORIOLANUS

## ACT II

Your ignorant election: enforce his pride  
 And his old hate unto you: besides, forget not  
 With what contempt he wore the humble weed,  
 How in his suit he scorn'd you: but your loves,  
 Thinking upon his services, took from you 220  
 The apprehension of his present portance,  
 Which most gibingly, ungravely, he did fashion  
 After the inveterate hate he bears you.

BRU. Lay  
 A fault on us, your tribunes; that we labour'd,  
 No impediment between, but that you must  
 Cast your election on him.

SIC. Say, you chose him  
 More after our commandment than as guided  
 By your own true affections; and that your minds,  
 Pre-occupied with what you rather must do  
 Than what you should, made you against the grain 230  
 To voice him consul: lay the fault on us.

BRU. Ay, spare us not. Say we read lectures to you,  
 How youngly he began to serve his country,  
 How long continued; and what stock he springs of,  
 The noble house o' the Marcians, from whence came

216 *enforce*] urge, lay stress on; with a sense of deliberate exaggeration.

Cf. III, iii, 3, *infra*: "*Enforce* him with his envy with the people."

221 *portance*] carriage, bearing

222 *ungravely*] without dignity, extravagantly

224-226 *we labour'd . . . election on him*] we took pains to remove any  
 obstacle or impediment in the way of your inclination to vote for  
 him.

231 *To voice him*] To vote him

235-242 *The noble house . . . great ancestor*] This account of Coriolanus'

That Ancus Marcius, Numa's daughter's son,  
 Who, after great Hostilius, here was king;  
 Of the same house Publius and Quintus were,  
 That our best water brought by conduits hither;  
 And [Censorinus] nobly named so, 240  
 Twice being [by the people chosen] censor,  
 Was his great ancestor.

SIC. One thus descended,  
 That hath beside well in his person wrought  
 To be set high in place, we did commend  
 To your remembrances: but you have found,  
 Scaling his present bearing with his past,  
 That he's your fixed enemy, and revoke  
 Your sudden approbation.

BRU. Say, you ne'er had done 't —  
 Harp on that still — but by our putting on:  
 And presently, when you have drawn your number, 250  
 Repair to the Capitol.

ancestry is drawn verbatim from the opening sentences of Plutarch's  
 "Lives."

240-242 *And [Censorinus] . . . ancestor*] These lines have been recon-  
 structed from North's text North here translates Plutarch thus:  
 "Censorinus also came of that family, that was so surnamed because  
 the people had chosen him censor twice" The Folios omit all refer-  
 ence to Censorinus, and placing a comma after *hither*, read thus.

"And Nobly nam'd, so twice being Censor,  
 Was his great Ancestor"

The added words are essential to intelligibility

246 *Scaling*] Weighing, balancing.

249 *by our putting on*] at our instigation.

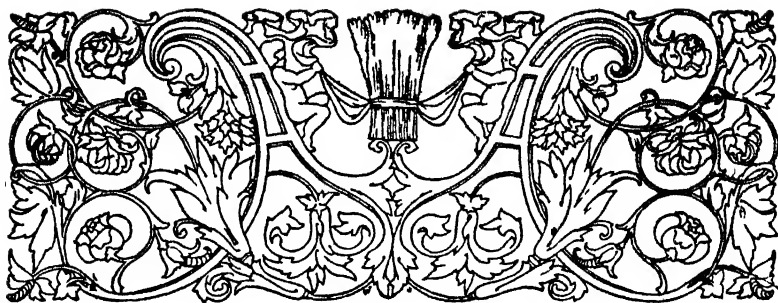
250 *drawn your number*] drawn together or levied the full number of your  
 supporters.

CITIZENS. We will so: almost all  
Repent in their election. *[Exeunt Citizens.]*

BRU. Let them go on;  
This mutiny were better put in hazard,  
Than stay, past doubt, for greater:  
If, as his nature is, he fall in rage  
With their refusal, both observe and answer  
The vantage of his anger.

SIC. To the Capitol, come:  
We will be there before the stream o' the people;  
And this shall seem, as partly 't is, their own,  
Which we have goaded onward. *[Exeunt. 260]*

256-257 *observe and answer . . . anger*] observe and be ready to take  
any advantage that his anger affords, improve the opportunity which  
his anger will offer.

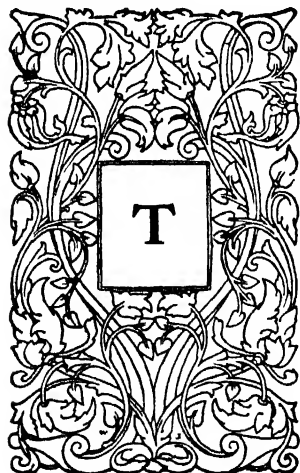


## ACT THIRD — SCENE I — ROME

### A STREET

*Cornets. Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, all the Gentry, COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and other Senators*

CORIOLANUS



ULLUS AUFIDIUS THEN  
had made new head?

LART. He had, my lord; and  
that it was which caused  
Our swifter composition.

COR. So then the Volscies  
stand but as at first;  
Ready, when time shall prompt  
them, to make road  
Upon's again.

COM. They are worn, lord  
consul, so,  
That we shall hardly in our ages  
see

Their banners wave again.

COR. Saw you Aufidius?

LART. On safe-guard he came to me; and did curse

Against the Volsces, for they had so vilely  
*Yielded the town: he is retired to Antium.* 10

COR. Spoke he of me?

LART. He did, my lord.

COR. How? what?

LART. How often he had met you, sword to sword;  
That of all things upon the earth he hated  
Your person most; that he would pawn his fortunes  
To hopeless restitution, so he might  
Be call'd your vanquisher.

COR. At Antium lives he?

LART. At Antium.

COR. I wish I had a cause to seek him there,  
To oppose his hatred fully. Welcome home. 20

*Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS*

Behold, these are the tribunes of the people,  
The tongues o' the common mouth: I do despise them;  
For they do prank them in authority,  
Against all noble sufferance.

SIC. Pass no further.

COR. Ha! what is that?

BRU. It will be dangerous to go on: no further.

1 *made new head*] raised a new body of troops.

3 *Our swifter composition*] Our hurried negotiation of peace.

5 *make road*] make advance.

9 *On safe-guard*] Under safe conduct, under escort.

16 *To hopeless restitution*] Without any hope of restitution.

23 *prank them*] plume themselves. Cf *Meas. for Meas.*, II, ii, 117-118:  
"man *Drest* in a little brief *authority*."

24 *Against all noble sufferance*] Past the endurance of all noble natures.

COR. What makes this change?

MEN. The matter?

COM. Hath he not pass'd the noble and the common?

• BRU. Cominius, no.

COR. Have I had children's voices? 30

FIRST SEN. Tribunes, give way; he shall to the  
market-place.

BRU. The people are incensed against him.

SIC. Stop,

Or all will fall in broil.

COR. Are these your herd?

Must these have voices, that can yield them now,  
And straight disclaim their tongues? What are your  
offices?

You being their mouths, why rule you not their teeth?  
Have you not set them on?

MEN. Be calm, be calm.

COR. It is a purposed thing, and grows by plot,  
To curb the will of the nobility:

Suffer't, and live with such as cannot rule, 40  
Nor ever will be ruled.

BRU. Call 't not a plot:

The people cry you mock'd them; and of late,  
When corn was given them gratis, you repined,  
Scandal'd the suppliants for the people, call'd them  
Time-pleasers, flatterers, foes to nobleness.

---

29 *noble . . . common*] Thus the First Folio. The later Folios read *noble*  
. . . *Commons* Rowe adopted *nobles . . . commons*.

43-44 *you repined, Scandal'd*] you murmured against, you slandered  
"Repine," which here seems to be used transitively, is commonly  
found as an intransitive verb (*i. e.*, "fret," or "murmur")

COR. Why, this was known before.

BRU. Not to them all.

COR. Have you inform'd them sithence?

BRU. How! I inform them!

COM. You are like to do such business.

BRU. Not unlike,

Each way, to better yours.

COR. Why then should I be consul? By yond clouds, 50  
Let me deserve so ill as you, and make me  
Your fellow tribune.

SIC. You show too much of that  
For which the people stir: if you will pass  
To where you are bound, you must inquire your way,  
Which you are out of, with a gentler spirit;  
Or never be so noble as a consul,  
Nor yoke with him for tribune.

MEN. Let 's be calm.

COM. The people are abused; set on. This paltering  
Becomes not Rome; nor has Coriolanus  
Deserved this so dishonour'd rub, laid falsely 60  
I' the plain way of his merit.

47 *sithence*] an archaic form of "since."

48 *You are like . . . business*] The Folios assign this speech to Cominius, but Theobald reasonably transferred it to Coriolanus.

48-49 *Not unlike . . . yours*] We are not unlikely to take a better course than you in every direction.

58 *The people are abused; set on*] The people are deceived; let us get on with our business.

*paltering*] shuffling or haggling.

60 *dishonour'd rub*] dishonourable impediment; "rub" is the technical term for an obstacle in the way of a throw at the game of bowls.

*falsely*] treacherously.

COR. Tell me of corn !  
 This was my speech, and I will speak 't again —  
 MEN. Not now, not now.  
 FIRST SEN. Not in this heat, sir, now.  
 COR. Now, as I live, I will. My nobler friends,  
 I crave their pardons:  
 For the mutable, rank-scented many, let them  
 Regard me as I do not flatter, and  
 Therein behold themselves: I say again,  
 In soothing them, we nourish 'gainst our senate  
 The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition, 70  
 Which we ourselves have plough'd for, sow'd and  
 scatter'd,  
 By mingling them with us, the honour'd number;  
 Who lack not virtue, no, nor power, but that  
 Which they have given to beggars.  
 MEN. Well, no more.  
 FIRST SEN. No more words, we beseech you.  
 COR. How ! no more !  
 As for my country I have shed my blood,  
 Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs  
 Coin words till their decay against those measles,

66 *many*] the populace; cf. the Greek *οἱ πολλοί*.

66-68 *let them . . . behold themselves*] let them turn their attention to me who am no flatterer of them, and see themselves in the mirror of my speech.

69 *soothing*] flattering.

70 *cockle*] a weed which poisons growing corn. Plutarch uses the word in the corresponding passage. Cf. *L. L. L.*, IV, iii, 379: "Sow'd cockle reap'd no corn."

78 *measles*] symptoms of leprosy; the disease now known as measles



Which we disdain should tetter us, yet sought  
The very way to catch them.

BRU. You speak o' the people, so  
As if you were a god to punish, not  
A man of their infirmity.

SIC. 'T were well  
We let the people know 't.

MEN. What, what? his choler?

COR. Choler!  
Were I as patient as the midnight sleep,  
By Jove, 't would be my mind!

SIC. It is a mind  
That shall remain a poison where it is,  
Not poison any further.

COR. Shall remain!  
Hear you this Triton of the minnows? mark you  
His absolute "shall"?

COM. 'T was from the canon.

COR. "Shall"! 90  
O good, but most unwise patricians! why,

seems too mild for the context. "Mesell" a word of different derivation, with which "measles" might easily be confused, is often found in pre-Shakespearean literature alike for "leprous," "leper," and "leprosy."

79 *tetter us*] cover our skin with a scab. "Ringworm" is often called "tetter."

89 *Triton*] Properly a seagod, son to Neptune, whom he served as trumpeter. Ovid describes him in *Metam.*, I, 333. "The horn and noise o' the monster's," line 95, suggests some of his attributes.

90 *from the canon*] contrary to the law; an infringement of legal right.

91 *O good*] Pope's correction of the Folio reading *O God!*

You grave but reckless senators, have you thus  
 Given Hydra here to choose an officer,  
 That with his peremptory "shall," being but  
 'The horn and noise o' the monster's, wants not spirit  
 To say he'll turn your current in a ditch,  
 And make your channel his? If he have power,  
 Then vail your ignorance; if none, awake  
 Your dangerous lenity. If you are learn'd,  
 Be not as common fools; if you are not, 100  
 Let them have cushions by you. You are plebeians,  
 If they be senators: and they are no less,  
 When, both your voices blended, the great'st taste  
 Most palates theirs. They choose their magistrate;  
 And such a one as he, who puts his "shall,"  
 His popular "shall," against a graver bench  
 Than ever frown'd in Greece. By Jove himself,  
 It makes the consuls base! and my soul aches  
 To know, when two authorities are up,  
 Neither supreme, how soon confusion 110

93 *Hydra*] the many-headed monster, which is described by Ovid, *Metam.*, IX, 69 seq. Cf. IV, i, 1, *infra*: "the beast With many heads," and 2 *Hen. IV*, *Induction*, 18.

95 *the monster's*] a reminiscence of the seagod Triton rather than of the many-headed Hydra; see l 89, *supra*, and note.

98 *vail your ignorance*] lower, have done with your ignorance of, or indifference to, the power or pretension of the mob.

102-104 *they are no less . . . theirs*] The plebeians are no less than senators when both ranks are blended to an equality, and the predominant flavour of the mixture smacks most of the populace. In other words, if the upper and lower classes are to have an equal voice in affairs of state, the voice of the lower class will predominate.

109 *are up*] are in office.

May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take

The one by the other.

COM. Well, on to the market-place.

COR. Whoever gave that counsel, to give forth  
The corn o' the storehouse gratis, as 't was used  
Sometime in Greece, —

MEN. Well, well, no more of that.

COR. Though there the people had more absolute  
power,

I say, they nourish'd disobedience, fed  
The ruin of the state.

BRU. Why, shall the people give  
One that speaks thus their voice?

COR. I'll give my reasons,  
More worthier than their voices. They know the corn  
Was not our recompense, resting well assured <sup>121</sup>  
They ne'er did service for 't: being press'd to the war,  
Even when the navel of the state was touch'd,  
They would not thread the gates. This kind of service  
Did not deserve corn gratis: being i' the war,  
Their mutinies and revolts, wherein they show'd  
Most valour, spoke not for them: the accusation  
Which they have often made against the senate,  
All cause unborn, could never be the native

121 *our recompense*] a reward given by us.

123 *when the navel . . . touch'd*] when the vital part of the state was  
menaced.

124 *thread*] pass through.

129 *All cause unborn*] With no shadow of justification.

*native*] origin, source. "Native" here means "natural parent" or  
"cause of birth." The usage is rare, though the word is frequently

Of our so frank donation. Well, what then? 150  
 How shall this bosom multiplied digest  
 The senate's courtesy? Let deeds express  
 , What's like to be their words: "We did request it;  
 We are the greater poll, and in true fear  
 They gave us our demands." Thus we debase  
 The nature of our seats, and make the rabble  
 Call our cares fears; which will in time  
 Break ope the locks o' the senate, and bring in  
 The crows to peck the eagles.

MEN. Come, enough.

BRU. Enough, with over measure.

COR. No, take more: 140

What may be sworn by, both divine and human,  
 Seal what I end withal! This double worship,  
 Where one part does disdain with cause, the other  
 Insult without all reason; where gentry, title, wisdom,  
 Cannot conclude but by the yea and no

found for native place or country. *Motive* has been suggested in its stead.

131 *bosom multiplied*] multitudinous bosom, heart of the many-headed people. Cf. *Lear*, V, iii, 50: "To pluck the *common bosom* on his side." Thus the Folios. Dyce ingeniously suggested *bisson multitude*. Cf. II, i, 59, *supra*.

132-133 *Let deeds . . . words*] Let their past acts indicate what they are likely to say.

134 *the greater poll*] the majority.

135-136 *debase . . . seats*] degrade the character of our position.

141-142 *What may be sworn by . . . withal*] May everything divine and human, which can give force to an oath, confirm the truth of my concluding words

145 *conclude*] take a decision.

Of general ignorance, — it must omit  
 Real necessities, and give way the while  
 To unstable slightness: purpose so barr'd, it follows,  
 Nothing is done to purpose. Therefore, beseech you, —  
 You that will be less fearful than discreet; 150  
 That love the fundamental part of state  
 More than you doubt the change on 't; that prefer  
 A noble life before a long, and wish  
 To jump a body with a dangerous physic  
 That 's sure of death without it, — at once pluck out  
 The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick  
 The sweet which is their poison. Your dishonour  
 Mangles true judgement and bereaves the state  
 Of that integrity which should become 't;  
 Not having the power to do the good it would, 160  
 For the ill which doth control 't.

BRU. Has said enough.

SIC. Has spoken like a traitor, and shall answer  
 As traitors do.

COR. Thou wretch, despite o'erwhelm thee!

146 *general ignorance*] vulgar ignorance.

148-149 *purpose . . . purpose*] When the good design is so baulked, it follows that no useful act is performed. There is a slight quibble on two shades of meaning in the word "purpose."

151-152 *That love the fundamental part . . . change on 't*] You who have affection for the genuine interest of the state in larger measure than you have fear of the revolution (which may destroy the state).

154 *jump*] expose to hazard.

159 *integrity*] soundness.

163 *despite*] hate.

What should the people do with these bald tribunes?  
 On whom depending, their obedience fails  
 To the greater bench: in a rebellion,  
 When what's not meet, but what must be, was law,  
 Then were they chosen: in a better hour,  
 Let what is meet be said it must be meet,  
 And throw their power i' the dust.

170

BRU. Manifest treason!

SIC. This a consul? no.

BRU. The ædiles, ho!

*Enter an Ædile*

Let him be apprehended.

SIC. Go, call the people: [*Exit Ædile.*] in whose  
 name myself

Attach thee as a traitorous innovator,  
 A foe to the public weal: obey, I charge thee,  
 And follow to thine answer.

COR. Hence, old goat!

SENATORS, &c. We'll surety him.

COM. Aged sir, hands off.

164 *bald*] paltry, witless. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, I, iii, 65: "This *bald* unjointed chat."

166 *To the greater bench*] To magistrates in higher position.

169 *Let what . . . be meet*] Let it be said by you that what is meet to be done must be done.

172 *ædiles*] "ædiles plebei," servants of the tribunes, who made arrests at their bidding and carried out death sentences. Of later date and higher rank were the "ædiles curules," city officers who had control of the streets, buildings, games, baths, and the like.

COR. Hence, rotten thing! or I shall shake thy  
bones  
Out of thy garments.  
SIC. Help, ye citizens!

*Enter a rabble of Citizens, with the Ædiles*

MEN. On both sides more respect. 180  
SIC. Here 's he that would take from you all your  
power.  
BRU. Seize him, ædiles!  
CITIZENS. Down with him! down with him!  
SENATORS, &c. Weapons, weapons, weapons!  
[*They all bustle about Coriolanus, crying,*  
"Tribunes!" "Patricians!" "Citizens!" "What, ho!"  
"Sicinius!" "Brutus!" "Coriolanus!" "Citizens!"  
"Peace, peace, peace!" "Stay! hold! peace!"  
MEN. What is about to be? I am out of breath.  
Confusion's near. I cannot speak. You, tribunes  
To the people! Coriolanus, patience! 190  
Speak, good Sicinius.

SIC. Hear me, people; peace!  
CITIZENS. Let's hear our tribune: peace! — Speak,  
speak, speak.

SIC. You are at point to lose your liberties:  
Marcius would have all from you; Marcius,  
Whom late you have named for consul.

MEN. Fie, fie, fie!  
This is the way to kindle, not to quench.

180 *You, tribunes*] The verb "speak" is obviously understood.

194 *at point*] on the point, about.

FIRST SEN. To unbuild the city, and to lay all flat.

SIC. What is the city but the people?

CITIZENS.

True,

The people are the city.

200

BRU. By the consent of all, we were establish'd  
The people's magistrates.

CITIZENS.

You so remain.

MEN. And so are like to do.

COM. That is the way to lay the city flat,  
To bring the roof to the foundation,  
And bury all which yet distinctly ranges,  
In heaps and piles of ruin.

SIC.

This deserves death.

BRU. Or let us stand to our authority,  
Or let us lose it. We do here pronounce,  
Upon the part o' the people, in whose power  
We were elected theirs, Marcius is worthy  
Of present death.

210

SIC. Therefore lay hold of him;  
Bear him to the rock Tarpeian, and from thence  
Into destruction cast him.

BRU.

Ædiles, seize him!

CITIZENS. Yield, Marcius, yield!

MEN.

Hear me one word;

Beseech you, tribunes, hear me but a word.

ÆDILES. Peace, peace!

---

206 *distinctly ranges*] is ranged in due order, is disposed in regular line or order.

213 *the rock Tarpeian*] the precipice on the Capitol whence criminals were flung and killed.



MEN. [*To Brutus*] Be that you seem, truly your  
country's friend,  
And temperately proceed to what you would  
Thus violently redress.

BRU. Sir, those cold ways, 220  
That seem like prudent helps, are very poisonous  
Where the disease is violent. Lay hands upon him,  
And bear him to the rock.

COR. No, I'll die here. [*Drawing his sword.*  
There's some among you have beheld me fighting:  
Come, try upon yourselves what you have seen me.

MEN. Down with that sword! Tribunes, withdraw  
awhile.

BRU. Lay hands upon him.

MEN. Help Marcius, help,  
You that be noble; help him, young and old!

CITIZENS. Down with him, down with him!

[*In this mutiny, the Tribunes, the Ædiles,  
and the People, are beat in.*

MEN. Go, get you to your house; be gone,  
away!  
All will be naught else.

SEC. SEN. Get you gone.

COM. Stand fast; 231  
We have as many friends as enemies.

MEN. Shall it be put to that?

FIRST SEN. The gods forbid!

220 *those cold ways*] those dispassionate methods.

231 *Stand fast*] Thus the Folios. Warburton with some justice transferred  
the speech to Coriolanus.

I prithee, noble friend, home to thy house;  
Leave us to cure this cause.

MEN. For 't is a sore upon us  
You cannot tent yourself: be gone, beseech you.

COM. Come, sir, along with us.

COR. I would they were barbarians — as they  
• are,  
Though in Rome litter'd — not Romans — as they  
are not,

Though calved i' the porch o' the Capitol, —

• MEN. Be gone:  
Put not your worthy rage into your tongue: 241  
One time will owe another.

COR. On fair ground  
I could beat forty of them.

MEN. I could myself  
Take up a brace o' the best of them; yea, the two  
tribunes.

COM. But now 't is odds beyond arithmetic;  
And manhood is call'd foolery, when it stands  
Against a falling fabric. Will you hence  
Before the tag return? whose rage doth rend

236 *tent*] probe with a view to curing; a familiar term in surgery.

240–242 *Be gone . . . owe another*] The Folios make these words part of Coriolanus' preceding speech. Steevens seems to have first assigned them to "Menenius," to whom they are clearly appropriate.

242 *One time . . . another*] One time will compensate for another; our time of triumph is coming.

245 *beyond arithmetic*] past calculation.

248 *the tag*] the rabble; commonly associated with the phrase "tag, rag and bobtail." Cf. *Jul. Cæs.*, I, ii, 255: "the tag rag people."

Like interrupted waters, and o'erbear  
What they are used to bear.

MEN. Pray you, be gone: 250  
I'll try whether my old wit be in request  
With those that have but little: this must be patch'd  
With cloth of any colour.

COM. Nay, come away.  
[*Exeunt Coriolanus, Cominius, and others.*]

FIRST PATRICIAN. This man has marr'd his fortune.

MEN. His nature is too noble for the world:  
He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,  
Or Jove for 's power to thunder. His heart 's his  
mouth:

What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent;  
And, being angry, does forget that ever  
He heard the name of death. [A noise within. 260  
Here 's goodly work!

SEC. PAT. I would they were a-bed!

MEN. I would they were in Tiber! What, the ven-  
geance,  
Could he not speak 'em fair?

*Re-enter BRUTUS and SICINIUS, with the rabble*

SIC. Where is this viper,  
That would depopulate the city, and  
Be every man himself?

249-250 *Like interrupted waters . . . bear*] Like waters whose flow is  
forcibly obstructed, so that in the overflow they overwhelm whatever  
is on their surface. Cf. *Two Gent.*, II, vii, 25-26: "The current . . .  
being stopp'd, impatiently doth rage."

MEN. You worthy tribunes —

SIC. He shall be thrown down the Tarpeian rock  
With rigorous hands: he hath resisted law,  
And therefore law shall scorn him further trial  
Than the severity of the public power,  
Which he so sets at nought.

FIRST CIT. He shall well know 270  
The noble tribunes are the people's mouths,  
And we their hands.

CITIZENS. He shall, sure on 't.

MEN. Sir, sir, —

SIC. Peace!

MEN. Do not cry havoc, where you should but hunt  
With modest warrant.

SIC. Sir, how comes 't that you  
Have help to make this rescue?

MEN. Hear me speak:  
As I do know the consul's worthiness,  
So can I name his faults, —

SIC. Consul! what consul?

MEN. The consul Coriolanus.

BRU. He consul! 280

CITIZENS. No, no, no, no, no.

MEN. If, by the tribunes' leave, and yours, good  
people,  
I may be heard, I would crave a word or two;

---

275 *cry havoc*] cry the signal for "no quarter," for indiscriminate slaughter. Cf. *Jul. Cæs.*, III, i, 274: "*Cry havoc*, and let slip the dogs of war." "*Havoc*" seems to represent an ancient form of "hawk," and the phrase seems to have originated among those engaged in the sport of falconry.

The which shall turn you to no further harm  
Than so much loss of time.

SIC. Speak briefly then;  
For we are peremptory to dispatch  
This viperous traitor: to eject him hence  
Were but one danger, and to keep him here  
Our certain death: therefore it is decreed  
He dies to-night.

MEN. Now the good gods forbid 290  
That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude  
Towards her deserved children is enroll'd  
In Jove's own book, like an unnatural dam  
Should now eat up her own!

SIC. He 's a disease that must be cut away.

MEN. O, he 's a limb that has but a disease;  
Mortal, to cut it off; to cure it, easy.  
What has he done to Rome that 's worthy death?  
Killing our enemies, the blood he hath lost —  
Which, I dare vouch, is more than that he hath 300  
By many an ounce — he dropp'd it for his country;  
And what is left, to lose it by his country  
Were to us all that do 't and suffer it  
A brand to the end o' the world.

SIC. This is clean kam.

284 *turn you to*] expose you to.

288 *one*] complete, whole. Thus the Folios; Theobald substituted *our*.

292 *deserved*] deserving.

297 *Mortal*] Fatal, deadly.

304 *brand*] *sc.* of infamy.

*clean kam*] These words are synonymous with "merely (*i. e.*, absolutely)

BRU. Merely awry: when he did love his country,  
It honour'd him.

MEN. The service of the foot  
Being once gangrened, is not then respected  
For what before it was.

BRU. We 'll hear no more.  
Pursue him to his house, and pluck him thence;  
Lest his infection, being of catching nature, 310  
Spread further.

MEN. One word more, one word.  
This tiger-footed rage, when it shall find  
The harm of unscann'd swiftness, will, too late,  
Tie leaden pounds to's heels. Proceed by process;  
Lest parties, as he is beloved, break out,  
And sack great Rome with Romans.

BRU. If it were so —

SIC. What do ye talk?  
Have we not had a taste of his obedience?  
Our ædiles smote? ourselves resisted? Come.

MEN. Consider this: he has been bred i' the wars 320  
Since he could draw a sword, and is ill school'd  
In bolted language; meal and bran together

awry" which immediately follow them. "Kam" is an old Celtic word for "crooked," which survives in the river-name Cam in Cambridge.  
306-308] *The service of the foot . . . before it was*] Menenius is here ironically adopting the tribune's own line of argument, doubtless with a view to reducing it to absurdity, when he is interrupted by the impatient Brutus. Hanmer would give the speech to the tribune Sicinius; others would make it part of Brutus' preceding remark.  
313 *unscann'd swiftness*] inconsiderate or rash haste.  
322 *bolted*] refined, sifted.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT III

He throws without distinction. Give me leave,  
I'll go to him, and undertake to bring him  
Where he shall answer, by a lawful form,  
In peace, to his utmost peril.

FIRST SEN. Noble tribunes,  
It is the humane way : the other course  
Will prove too bloody ; and the end of it  
Unknown to the beginning.

SIC. Noble Menenius,  
Be you then as the people's officer. 330  
Masters, lay down your weapons.

BRU. Go not home.

SIC. Meet on the market-place. We'll attend you  
there :  
Where, if you bring not Marcius, we'll proceed  
In our first way.

MEN. I'll bring him to you.

[*To the Senators*] Let me desire your company : he  
must come,  
Or what is worst will follow.

FIRST SEN. Pray you, let's to him.  
[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II — A ROOM IN CORIOLANUS'S HOUSE

*Enter CORIOLANUS with Patricians*

COR. Let them pull all about mine ears ; present me  
Death on the wheel, or at wild horses' heels ;  
Or pile ten hills on the Tarpeian rock,  
That the precipitation might down stretch

Below the beam of sight; yet will I still  
Be thus to them.

A PATRICIAN. You do the nobler.

COR. I muse my mother

Does not approve me further, who was wont  
To call them woollen vassals, things 'created  
To buy and sell with groats, to show bare heads 10  
In congregations, to yawn, be still and wonder,  
When one but of my ordinance stood up  
To speak of peace or war.

*Enter VOLUMNIA*

I talk of you:

Why did you wish me milder? would you have me  
False to my nature? Rather say, I play  
The man I am.

VOL. O, sir, sir, sir,  
I would have had you put your power well on,  
Before you had worn it out.

COR. Let go.

VOL. You might have been enough the man you are,  
With striving less to be so: lesser had been 20  
The thwartings of your dispositions, if

5 *beam of sight*] ray of sight, range of vision.

7 *muse*] wonder.

9 *woollen vassals*] coarse-clothed fellows. Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, III, i, 68:

"hempen home-spuns."

12 *ordinance*] order, rank.

21 *thwartings of your dispositions*] Theobald's correction of the Folio  
reading *things of your dispositions*.



You had not show'd them how ye were disposed,  
Ere they lack'd power to cross you.

COR. Let them hang.

VOL. Ay, and burn too.

*Enter MENENIUS with the Senators*

MEN. Come, come, you have been too rough, something too rough;  
You must return and mend it.

FIRST SEN. There 's no remedy;  
Unless, by not so doing, our good city  
Cleave in the midst, and perish.

VOL. Pray, be counsell'd:  
I have a heart as little apt as yours,  
But yet a brain that leads my use of anger 30  
To better vantage.

MEN. Well said, noble woman!  
Before he should thus stoop to the herd, but that  
The violent fit o' the time craves it as physic  
For the whole state, I would put mine armour on,  
Which I can scarcely bear.

COR. What must I do?

MEN. Return to the tribunes.

24 *Ay, and burn too*] This is an involuntary outburst of Volumnia's horror of the mob. Some editors object needlessly that the words are inconsistent with the speaker's plea for patience.

29 *apt*] *sc.* to submit, submissive. Thus the Folios. Many changes have been suggested. But though the expression is elliptical, the context makes the meaning plain.

32 *the herd*] Theobald's correction of the Folio reading *th' heart*. Coriolanus has twice already applied the word "herd" to the rabble of Rome, I, iv, 31, and III, i, 33, *supra*.

• COR. Well, what then? what then?

MEN. Repent what you have spoke.

COR. For them! I cannot do it to the gods;  
Must I then do 't to them?

VOL. You are too absolute;  
Though therein you can never be too noble, 40  
But when extremities speak. I have heard you say,  
Honour and policy, like unsever'd friends,  
I' the war do grow together: grant that, and tell me,  
In peace what each of them by the other lose,  
That they combine not there.

COR. Tush, tush!

MEN. A good demand.

VOL. If it be honour in your wars to seem  
The same you are not, which, for your best ends,  
You adopt your policy, how is it less or worse,  
That it shall hold companionship in peace  
With honour, as in war, since that to both 50  
It stands in like request?

COR. Why force you this?

VOL. Because that now it lies you on to speak  
To the people; not by your own instruction,  
Nor by the matter which your heart prompts you,  
But with such words that are but roted in  
Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables

39-41 *You are too absolute . . . extremities speak*] You are too self-confident; your resolution and self-confidence can never be out of place in a noble heart, except in the presence of desperate dangers.

51 *force*] press, urge.

55 *roted in Your tongue*] learnt by rote, not uttered spontaneously.

Of no allowance to your bosom's truth.  
 Now, this no more dishonours you at all  
 Than to take in a town with gentle words,  
 Which else would put you to your fortune and 60  
 The hazard of much blood.  
 I would dissemble with my nature, where  
 My fortunes and my friends at stake required  
 I should do so in honour. I am in this,  
 Your wife, your son, these senators, the nobles;  
 And you will rather show our general louts  
 How you can frown than spend a fawn upon 'em,  
 For the inheritance of their love and safeguard  
 Of what that want might ruin.

MEN.

Noble lady!

Come, go with us; speak fair: you may salve so, 70  
 Not what is dangerous present, but the loss  
 Of what is past.

VOL.

I prithee now, my son,  
 Go to them, with this bonnet in thy hand;  
 And thus far having stretch'd it — here be with them —

57 *Of no allowance . . . truth*] Without the authority or approbation of  
 the truth which is innate in your heart.

59 *take in*] conquer, subdue. Cf. I, ii, 24, *supra*.

60 *put you to your fortune*] make you risk or imperil your fortune.

64-65 *I am in this . . . nobles*] I am spokesman in this matter for your  
 wife, etc.

66 *our general louts*] our common people.

69 *that want*] the want of their love, their enmity.

71 *Not what is*] Not only, not merely, what is. Cf. III, iii, 98, *infra*.

73 *this bonnet*] Volumnia points to Coriolanus' head-gear.

74 *here be with them*] here set yourself on a level with them, show them  
 deference.

Thy knee bussing the stones — for in such business  
 Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant  
 More learned than the ears — waving thy head,  
 Which often, thus, correcting thy stout heart,  
 Now humble as the ripest mulberry  
 That will not hold the handling: or say to them, 80  
 Thou art their soldier, and being bred in broils  
 Hast not the soft way which, thou dost confess,  
 Were fit for thee to use, as they to claim,  
 In asking their good loves; but thou wilt frame  
 Thyself, forsooth, hereafter theirs, so far  
 As thou hast power and person.

MEN. This but done,  
 Even as she speaks, why, their hearts were yours;  
 For they have pardons, being ask'd, as free  
 As words to little purpose.

VOL. Prithee now,  
 Go, and be ruled: although I know thou hadst rather 90

75 *bussing*] kissing.

77 *waving*] gently moving or bowing.

78 *Which often, thus,*] This is the punctuation of the Folios, and is difficult. Only one comma is required, and should follow *which*.

79 *humble*] This word is here the imperative of the verb "to humble," and governs as its object "Which" (*i. e.*, the head), in the previous line.

79-80 *the ripest mulberry . . . handling*] The fully-ripe mulberry is detached from the tree at the slightest touch of the hand.

86 *power and person*] individual or personal capacity.

88-89 *they have pardons . . . little purpose*] they are prone to grant pardon when asked as readily as to speak words of no particular significance.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT III

Follow thine enemy in a fiery gulf  
Than flatter him in a bower.

*Enter COMINIUS*

Here is Cominius.

COM. I have been i' the market-place; and, sir, 't is fit  
You make strong party, or defend yourself  
By calmness or by absence: all 's in anger.

MEN. Only fair speech.

COM. I think 't will serve, if he  
Can thereto frame his spirit.

VOL. He must, and will.  
Prithee now, say you will, and go about it.

COR. Must I go show them my unbarb'd sconce?  
must I,

With my base tongue, give to my noble heart 100  
A lie, that it must bear? Well, I will do 't:  
Yet, were there but this single plot to lose,  
This mould of Marcius, they to dust should grind it,  
And throw 't against the wind. To the market-place!  
You have put me now to such a part, which never  
I shall discharge to the life.

COM. Come, come, we 'll prompt you.

VOL. I prithee now, sweet son, as thou hast said  
My praises made thee first a soldier, so,

94 *You make strong party*] You collect a strong body of supporters.

99 *unbarb'd sconce*] uncovered head. "Barbed" (or "barded") is often  
found in the sense of "armoured" or "covered with armour." Cf.  
*Rich. III*, I, i, 10: "*barbed steeds*."

102 *this single plot*] this sole piece of earth, my own mere body only.

To have my praise for this, perform a part  
Thou hast not done before.

COR.

Well, I must do 't:

110

• Away, my disposition, and possess me  
Some harlot's spirit! my throat of war be turn'd,  
Which quired with my drum, into a pipe  
Small as an eunuch, or the virgin voice  
That babies lulls asleep! the smiles of knaves  
Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up  
The glasses of my sight! a beggar's tongue  
Make motion through my lips, and my arm'd knees,  
Who bow'd but in my stirrup, bend like his  
That hath received an alms! I will not do 't;  
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth,  
And by my body's action teach my mind  
A most inherent baseness.

120

VOL.

At thy choice then:

To beg of thee, it is my more dishonour  
Than thou of them. Come all to ruin: let  
Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear  
Thy dangerous stoutness, for I mock at death  
With as big heart as thou. Do as thou list.

112 *Some harlot's spirit*] Some ribald's spirit. "Harlot" as a term of contempt was applied to men as well as to women. Cf. *Com. of Errors*, V, i, 205: "she with *harlots* feasted in my house."

113 *quired*] played in concert.

116 *Tent in . . . take up*] encamp, lodge in . . . occupy.

121 *surcease to honour*] cease to honour, give over respecting.

125-127 *let Thy mother . . . stoutness*] let thy mother rather suffer the worst from thy pride than continue to live in nervous fear of thy dangerous obstinacy. Volumnia deprecates the uncertainty of the issue.

Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me,  
But owe thy pride thyself.

COR. Pray, be content: 130

Mother, I am going to the market-place;  
Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves,  
Cog their hearts from them, and come home beloved  
Of all the trades in Rome. Look, I am going:  
Commend me to my wife. I'll return consul;  
Or never trust to what my tongue can do  
I' the way of flattery further.

VOL. Do your will. [Exit.

COM. Away! the tribunes do attend you: arm your-  
self

To answer mildly; for they are prepared  
With accusations, as I hear, more strong 140  
Than are upon you yet.

COR. The word is "mildly." Pray you, let us go:  
Let them accuse me by invention, I  
Will answer in mine honour.

MEN. Ay, but mildly.

COR. Well, mildly be it then. Mildly! [Exeunt.

130 *owe*] Thus the First Folio. The later Folios read *own*, which is the meaning of *owe* here.

132 *I'll mountebank their loves*] I'll play the conjurer and thereby get their loves.

133 *Cog*] Get by cheating.

## SCENE III — THE SAME

## THE FORUM

*Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS*

BRU. In this point charge him home, that he affects  
Tyrannical power: if he evade us there,  
Enforce him with his envy to the people;  
And that the spoil got on the Antiates  
Was ne'er distributed.

*Enter an Ædile*

What, will he come?

ÆD. He 's coming.

BRU. How accompanied?

ÆD. With old Menenius and those senators  
That always favour'd him.

SIC. Have you a catalogue  
Of all the voices that we have procured,  
Set down by the poll?

ÆD. I have; 't is ready.

10

SIC. Have you collected them by tribes?

8 *Enforce him with his envy*] Press him hard with, urge against him,  
his hatred. Cf. II, iii, 216, *supra*: "Enforce his pride."

8-11 *Have you a catalogue . . . by tribes*] According to Plutarch there  
were two methods of voting for public officers, by tribes (or local  
districts) with a widely distributed and democratic suffrage, and by  
centuries (or military divisions) with a more restricted and more aris-  
tocratic suffrage. The former method was justly held by the tribune  
to give the advantage to the populace, and the latter to the upper  
classes. The tribune consequently adopted the vote by tribes. North  
in translating Plutarch interpolated the remark that in voting by tribes  
"voices were numbered by the polls." This phrase is alluded to by  
the tribune Sicinius when he asks the ædile about "a catalogue of



ÆD.

I have.

SIC. Assemble presently the people hither:

And when they hear me say "It shall be so  
I' the right and strength o' the commons," be it  
either

For death, for fine, or banishment, then let them,  
If I say fine, cry "Fine," if death, cry "Death,"  
Insisting on the old prerogative  
And power i' the truth o' the cause.

ÆD.

I shall inform them.

BRU. And when such time they have begun to cry,  
Let them not cease, but with a din confused 20  
Enforce the present execution  
Of what we chance to sentence.

ÆD.

Very well,

SIC. Make them be strong, and ready for this hint,  
When we shall hap to give 't them.

BRU.

Go about it.

*[Exit Ædile.]*

Put him to choler straight: he hath been used  
Ever to conquer and to have his worth  
Of contradiction: being once chafed, he cannot  
Be rein'd again to temperance; then he speaks

all the voices . . . set down by the poll." As a matter of fact the voting "by poll" was an essential preliminary in both voting methods; the tribe or century each alike cast its single collective vote, only after its members had been polled individually and the determining plurality ascertained. Shakespeare follows North in the error of associating "votes by poll" distinctively with the tribune's favoured method of voting by tribes.

26-27 have his worth *Of contradiction*] gain what he thinks worth disputing about.

## CORIO LANUS

SIC.

Well, here he comes.

30

*Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, and COMINIUS, with Senators and Patricians*

**MEN.** Calmly, I do beseech you.

COR. Ay, as an ostler, that for the poorest piece  
Will bear the knave by the volume. The honour'd  
                gods

Keep Rome in safety, and the chairs of justice  
Supplied with worthy men ! plant love among 's !  
Throng our large temples with the shows of peace,  
And not our streets with war !

FIRST SEN.

**Amen, amen.**

**MEN.** A noble wish.

*Re-enter Ædile, with Citizens*

Sic. Draw near, ye people.

ÆD. List to your tribunes; audience: peace, I say! 40

**COR.** First, hear me speak.

**BOTH TRI.** Well, say. Peace, ho!

COR. Shall I be charged no further than this present? Must all determine here?

29-30 *which looks With us* | which seems likely with our aid.

32-33 for the poorest piece . . . volume] for the smallest coin will stand being called knave often enough to fill a volume.

86 *Throng*] Theobald's correction of the Folio misreading *Through*.  
*shows*] emblems.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT III

SIC. I do demand,  
If you submit you to the people's voices,  
Allow their officers, and are content  
To suffer lawful censure for such faults  
As shall be proved upon you.

COR. I am content.

MEN. Lo, citizens, he says he is content:  
The warlike service he has done, consider; think  
Upon the wounds his body bears, which show 50  
Like graves i' the holy churchyard.

COR. Scratches with briers,  
Scars to move laughter only.

MEN. Consider further,  
That when he speaks not like a citizen,  
You find him like a soldier: do not take  
His rougher accents for malicious sounds,  
But, as I say, such as become a soldier  
Rather than envy you.

COM. Well, well, no more.

COR. What is the matter  
That being pass'd for consul with full voice  
I am so dishonour'd that the very hour 60  
You take it off again?

SIC. Answer to us.

COR. Say, then: 't is true, I ought so.

SIC. We charge you, that you have contrived to take  
From Rome a l season'd office, and to wind

55 *accents*] Theobald's corrections of the Folio misreading *Actions*.

57 *envy you*] malign or spite you.

63 *contrived*] planned, plotted.

64 *season'd*] established by time and custom

Yourself into a power tyrannical;  
For which you are a traitor to the people.

COR. How! traitor!

MEN. Nay, temperately; your promise.

COR. The fires i' the lowest hell fold-in the people!

Call me their traitor! Thou injurious' tribune!

Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths, 70

In thy hands clutch'd as many millions, in

Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say

"Thou liest" unto thee with a voice as free

As I do pray the gods.

SIC. Mark you this, people?

CITIZENS. To the rock, to the rock with him!

SIC. Peace!

We need not put new matter to his charge:

What you have seen him do and heard him speak,

Beating your officers, cursing yourselves,

Opposing laws with strokes, and here defying 80

Those whose great power must try him; even this,

So criminal and in such capital kind,

Deserves the extremest death.

BRU. But since he hath  
Served well for Rome —

COR. What do you prate of service?

BRU. I talk of that, that know it.

COR. You?

MEN. Is this the promise that you made your mother?

COM. Know, I pray you, —

69 *injurious*] insolent, insulting.

71 *In thy hands clutch'd*] Were there clutched or grasped in thy hands.

COR. I'll know no further:  
 Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,  
 Vagabond exile, flaying, pent to linger 90  
 But with a grain a day, I would not buy  
 Their mercy at the price of one fair word,  
 Nor check my courage for what they can give,  
 To have 't with saying "Good morrow."

SIC. For that he has,  
 As much as in him lies, from time to time  
 Envied against the people, seeking means  
 To pluck away their power, as now at last  
 Given hostile strokes, and that not in the presence  
 Of dreaded justice, but on the ministers  
 That do distribute it; in the name o' the people, 100  
 And in the power of us the tribunes, we,  
 Even from this instant, banish him our city,  
 In peril of precipitation  
 From off the rock Tarpeian, never more  
 To enter our Rome gates: i' the people's name,  
 I say it shall be so.

CITIZENS. It shall be so, it shall be so; let him away:  
 He 's banish'd, and it shall be so.

COM. Hear me, my masters, and my common  
 friends, —

SIC. He 's sentenced; no more hearing.

COM. Let me speak:  
 I have been consul, and can show for Rome 111

96 *Envied against*] Maligned, expressed himself with malice against.

98 *not*] not only, not merely. Cf. III, ii, 71, *supra*.

111 *for Rome*] Theobald's correction for the Folio *from Rome*. Cf. IV, ii,  
 28, *infra*: "good man the wounds that he does bear *for Rome*."

Her enemies' marks upon me. I do love  
 My country's good with a respect more tender,  
 More holy and profound, than mine own life,  
 My dear wife's estimate, her womb's increase  
 And treasure of my loins; then if I would  
 Speak that —

SIC.<sup>a</sup> We know your drift: — speak what?

BRU. There 's no more to be said, but he is banish'd,  
 As enemy to the people and his country:  
 It shall be so. 120

CITIZENS. It shall be so, it shall be so.

COR. You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate  
 As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize  
 As the dead carcasses of unburied men  
 That do corrupt my air, I banish you;  
 And here remain with your uncertainty!  
 Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts!  
 Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,  
 Fan you into despair! Have the power still  
 To banish your defenders; till at length 130  
 Your ignorance, which finds not till it feels,  
 Making not reservation of yourselves,

115 *estimate*] reputation.

122 *common cry*] vulgar pack. Cf. IV, vi, 148, *infra*: "you and *your cry*."

123 *As reek . . . rotten fens*] Cf. *Tempest*, II, i, 45-46: "As if it had lungs, and rotten ones. Or as 't were perfumed by a fen."

181 *which finds not till it feels*] Cf. the familiar political maxim in James Harrington's *Oceana*, 1656: "The people cannot see but they can feel."

182 *Making not reservation of yourselves*] Making no attempt to reserve or preserve the means of defending yourselves. *Not* is Capell's substitution for the Folio reading *but*, which would give the line the different

# CORIOLANUS

## ACT III

Still your own foes, deliver you as most  
 Abated captives to some nation  
 That won you without blows! Despising,  
 For you, the city, thus I turn my back:  
 There is a world elsewhere.

[*Exeunt Coriolanus, Cominius, Menenius, Senators and Patricians.*]

ÆD. The people's enemy is gone, is gone!

CITIZENS. Our enemy is banish'd! he is gone! Hoo!  
 hoo! [*They all shout, and throw up their caps.*]

SIC. Go, see him out at gates, and follow him, 140  
 As he hath follow'd you, with all despite;  
 Give him deserved vexation. Let a guard  
 Attend us through the city.

CITIZENS. Come, come, let's see him out at gates;  
 come.

The gods preserve our noble tribunes! Come. [*Exeunt.*]

and less coherent sense of "only working in order to preserve your mere lives in the city."

134 *Abated*] Dejected, depressed.

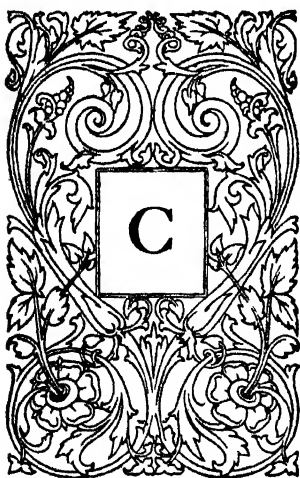


## ACT FOURTH — SCENE I — ROME

### BEFORE A GATE OF THE CITY

*Enter* CORIOLANUS, VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, MENENIUS, COMINIUS,  
with the young Nobility of Rome

CORIOLANUS



OME, LEAVE YOUR TEARS;  
a brief farewell: the beast  
With many heads butts me  
away. Nay, mother,  
Where is your ancient courage?  
you were used  
To say extremity was the trier  
of spirits;  
That common chances common  
men could bear;  
That when the sea was calm all  
boats alike  
Show'd mastership in floating;  
fortune's blows,

When most struck home, being gentle wounded, craves  
A noble cunning: you were used to load me

1-2 *the beast With many heads*] Cf. III, i, 93, *supra*, and 2 *Hen. IV*,  
*Induction*, 18: "the blunt monster with uncounted heads."



With precepts that would make invincible 10  
The heart that conn'd them.

VIR. O heavens! O heavens!

COR. Nay, I prithee, woman, —

VOL. Now the red pestilence strike all trades in  
Rome,

And occupations perish!

COR. What, what, what!

I shall be loved when I am lack'd. Nay, mother,  
Resume that spirit when you were wont to say,  
If you had been the wife of Hercules,  
Six of his labours you 'ld have done, and saved  
Your husband so much sweat. Cominius,  
Droop not; adieu. Farewell, my wife, my mother: 20  
I'll do well yet. Thou old and true Menenius,  
Thy tears are salter than a younger man's,  
And venomous to thine eyes. My sometime general  
I have seen thee stern, and thou hast oft beheld  
Heart-hardening spectacles; tell these sad women,

4 *extremity*] desperate misfortune. Thus the Second and later Folios.

The First Folio gives the word in the plural.

6-7 *when the sea . . . floating*] The same illustration is employed in *Troil.*  
*and Cress.*, I, iii, 33-37.

7-9 *fortune's blows . . . cunning*] when Fortune strikes her hardest  
blows, it requires a noble wisdom to suffer the wounds with gentle  
resignation. The language is harsh and elliptical, but the sense is  
clear. Thus the First Folio. None of the suggested emendations  
merits attention.

13 *the red pestilence*] Cf. *Tempest*, I, ii, 364: "The red plague rid you."

14 *occupations*] trades, callings, employment. Cf. IV, vi, 98, *infra*: "the  
voice of *occupation*" (*i. e.*, the working class), and *Tempest*, II, i, 148:  
"No *occupation*; all men idle."

'T is fond to wail inevitable strokes,  
 As 't is to laugh at 'em. My mother, you wot well  
 My hazards still have been your solace: and  
 Believe 't not lightly — though I go alone,  
 Like to a lonely dragon, that his fen 30  
 Makes fear'd and talk'd of more than'seen your son  
 Will or exceed the common, or be caught  
 With cautelous baits and practice.

VOL. My first son,  
 Whither wilt thou go? Take good Cominius  
 With thee awhile: determine on some course,  
 More than a wild exposure to each chance  
 That starts i' the way before thee.

COR. O the gods!

COM. I'll follow thee a month, devise with thee  
 Where thou shalt rest, that thou mayst hear of us  
 And we of thee: so, if the time thrust forth 40  
 A cause for thy repeal, we shall not send  
 O'er the vast world to seek a single man,  
 And lose advantage, which doth ever cool  
 I' the absence of the needer.

COR. Fare ye well:  
 Thou hast years upon thee; and thou art too full

26 *fond*] foolish.

32 *or exceed the common*] either surpass or outdo the ordinary exploits  
 b have formerly been his mother's consolation).

33 *cautelous*] crafty, dishonest.

*practice*] trick or stratagem.

36 *exposure*] : unusual form of "exposure." Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, IV, iii,  
 439: "composture." The similar form "imposture" is in common  
 use.

Of the wars' surfeits, to go rove with one  
That's yet unbruised: bring me but out at gate.  
Come, my sweet wife, my dearest mother, and  
My friends of noble touch, when I am forth, •  
Bid me farewell, and smile. I pray you, come. 50  
While I remain above the ground, you shall  
Hear from me still, and never of me aught  
But what is like me formerly.

MEN. That 's worthily  
As any ear can hear. Come, let 's not weep.  
If I could shake off but one seven years  
From these old arms and legs, by the good gods,  
I'd with thee every foot.

COR. Give me thy hand:  
Come. *[Exeunt.]*

## SCENE II — THE SAME

## A STREET NEAR THE GATE

*Enter the two Tribunes, SICINIUS and BRUTUS, with the Ædile*

SIC. Bid them all home; he's gone, and we'll no  
further.

The nobility are vex'd, whom we see have sided  
In his behalf.

BRU. Now we have shown our power,  
Let us seem humbler after it is done  
Than when it was a-doing.

46 *the wars' surfeits*] excesses of war, the rough usages of war.

49 *of noble touch*] of true metal; an allusion to the touchstone, whereby metals are tested. Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, IV, iii, 387, where gold is called the "*touch of hearts*."

SIC. Bid them home:  
Say their great enemy is gone, and they  
Stand in their ancient strength.

BRU. Dismiss them home. [*Exit Ædile.*]  
Here comes his mother.

*Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and MENENIUS*

SIC. Let 's not meet her.

BRU. Why?

SIC. They say she 's mad.

BRU. They have ta'en note of us: keep on your way: 10

VOL. O, ye're well met: the hoarded plague o' the gods  
Requite your love!

MEN. Peace, peace; be not so loud.

VOL. If that I could for weeping, you should hear, —  
Nay, and you shall hear some. [*To Brutus*] Will you be  
gone?

VIR. [*To Sicinius*] You shall stay too: I would I had  
the power  
To say so to my husband.

SIC. Are you mankind?

VOL. Ay, fool; is that a shame? Note but this fool.  
Was not a man my father? Hadst thou foxship

11-12 *the hoarded plague . . . your love!*] Cf. *Lear*, II, iv, 160-161: "All  
the stored vengeance of heaven fall On her ungrateful top."

16-17 *Are you mankind? . . . shame?*] "Mankind" is first used in the  
sense of "man," "masculine creature lacking feminine gentleness."  
Cf. *Wint. Tale*, II, iii, 67: "*A mankind witch!*" Volumnia in her retort  
credits the word with the more general meaning of a "human being."

17 *foxship*] the mean cunning of an ungrateful fox. The form seems  
unknown elsewhere, though "foxy" in the sense of "crafty" is not  
uncommon. Foxes were held to be typical of ingratitude. Cf.  
*Lear*, III, vii, 28: "Ingrateful fox!"

To banish him that struck more blows for Rome  
Than thou hast spoken words?

SIC. O blessed heavens! 20

VOL. More noble blows than ever thou wise words;  
And for Rome's good. I'll tell thee what; yet go:  
Nay, but thou shalt stay too: I would my son  
Were in Arabia, and thy tribe before him,  
His good sword in his hand.

SIC. What then?

VIR. What then!

He'd make an end of thy posterity.

VOL. Bastards and all.

Good man, the wounds that he does bear for Rome!

MEN. Come, come, peace.

SIC. I would he had continued to his country 30  
As he began, and not unknit himself  
The noble knot he made.

BRU. I would he had.

VOL. "I would he had!" 'T was you incensed the  
rabble;

Cats, that can judge as fitly of his worth  
As I can of those mysteries which heaven  
Will not have earth to know.

23-24 *I would my son Were in Arabia*] Arabia is used generally of a desert country. Cf. *Cymb.*, I, i, 167: "I would they were in *Afric*," and *Macb.*, III, iv, 104: "dare me to the *desert* with thy sword."

28 *Good man . . . for Rome!*] Cf. III, iii, 111, *supra*.

31 *unknit himself*] himself untied. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, V, i, 15-16: "will you again *unknit* This churlish knot?"

34 *Cats*] This word of reproach, which Volumnia addresses to the tribunes, was a common term of reproach. Cf. *All's Well*, IV, iii, 222: "now he's a *cat* to me."

BRU. Pray, let us go.

VOL. Now, pray, sir, get you gone:

You have done a brave deed. Ere you go, hear this:  
 As far as doth the Capitol exceed  
 The meanest house in Rome, so far my son —  
 This lady's husband here, this, do you see? —  
 Whom you have banish'd, does exceed you all.

40

BRU. Well, well, we'll leave you.

SIC. Why stay we to be baited  
 With one that wants her wits?

VOL. Take my prayers with you.

[*Exeunt Tribunes*]

I would the gods had nothing else to do  
 But to confirm my curses! Could I meet 'em  
 But once a-day, it would unclog my heart  
 Of what lies heavy to 't.

MEN. You have told them home;  
 And, by my troth, you have cause. You'll sup with me?

VOL. Anger's my meat; I sup upon myself,  
 And so shall starve with feeding. Come, let's go:  
 Leave this faint puling, and lament as I do,  
 In anger, Juno-like. Come, come, come.

50

[*Exeunt Vol. and Vir.*]

MEN. Fie, fie, fie!

[*Exit.*]

43-44 *baited With one*] teased or taunted by one.

46 *confirm*] ratify, put into effect.

*meet 'em*] meet the tribunes.

48 *You have told them home*] You have spoken out plainly; you have driven your words home. Cf. II, ii, 101, *supra*: "I cannot *speak him home*," and III, iii, 1: "charge him *home*."

52 *faint puling*] weak whining.

# CORIOLANUS

## ACT IV

### SCENE III — A HIGHWAY BETWEEN ROME AND ANTIUM

*Enter a Roman and a Volsce, meeting*

ROM. I know you well, sir, and you know me: your name, I think, is Adrian.

VOLS. It is so, sir: truly, I have forgot you.

ROM. I am a Roman; and my services are, as you are, against 'em: know you me yet?

VOLS. Nicanor? no.

ROM. The same, sir.

VOLS. You had more beard when I last saw you; but your favour is well appeared by your tongue. What's the news in Rome? I have a note from the Volscian state, to find you out there: you have well saved me a day's journey.

ROM. There hath been in Rome strange insurrections; the people against the senators, patricians and nobles.

VOLS. Hath been! is it ended then? Our state thinks not so: they are in a most warlike preparation, and hope to come upon them in the heat of their division.

---

9 *your favour . . . tongue*] your identity is quite recognisable in your speech. "Favour" means "face" or "personal appearance." "Appeared" has the significance of "made clear or obvious." Cf. *Cymb.*, III, iv, 144: "to appear itself," and *Meas. for Meas.*, II, iv, 29-30: "where their untaught love Must needs appear (*i. e.*, bring to light) offence." *Appeared* is the Folio reading, for which other words including *affeer'd* (*i. e.*, confirmed) and *approved* have been substituted by the editors. But no change seems essential.

ROM. The main blaze of it is past, but a small thing would make it flame again: for the nobles receive so to heart the banishment of that worthy Coriolanus, that <sup>20</sup> they are in a ripe aptness to take all power from the people, and to pluck from them their tribunes for ever. This lies glowing, I can tell you, and is almost mature for the violent breaking out.

VOLS. Coriolanus banished!

ROM. Banished, sir.

VOLS. You will be welcome with this intelligence,  
• Nicanor.

ROM. The day serves well for them now. I have heard it said, the fittest time to corrupt a man's wife is <sup>30</sup> when she's fallen out with her husband. Your noble Tullus Aufidius will appear well in these wars, his great opposer, Coriolanus, being now in no request of his country.

VOLS. He cannot choose. I am most fortunate, thus accidentally to encounter you: you have ended my business, and I will merrily accompany you home.

ROM. I shall, between this and supper, tell you most strange things from Rome; all tending to the good of their adversaries. Have you an army ready, say you?

VOLS. A most royal one; the centurions and their <sup>40</sup>

---

21 *ripe aptness*] eager readiness.

23 *This lies glowing*] The situation is compared to glowing embers about to burst into flame.

29 *The day . . . now*] The turn of events well serves the purpose of the Volscians now.

40 *A most royal one*] A first-rate one.

*centurions*] captains of a troop of a hundred men.



charges, distinctly billeted, already in the entertainment, and to be on foot at an hour's warning.

ROM. I am joyful to hear of their readiness, and am the man, I think, that shall set them in present action. So, sir, heartily well met, and most glad of your company.

VOLS. You take my part from me, sir; I have the most cause to be glad of yours.

ROM. Well, let us go together. [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE IV — ANTIIUM

## BEFORE AUFIDIUS'S HOUSE

*Enter CORIOLANUS in mean apparel, disguised and muffled*

COR. A goodly city is this Antium. City,  
'T is I that made thy widows: many an heir  
Of these fair edifices 'fore my wars  
Have I heard groan and drop: then know me not;  
Lest that thy wives with spits, and boys with stones,  
In puny battle slay me.

*Enter a Citizen*

Save you, sir.

CIT. And you.

COR. Direct me, if it be your will,  
Where great Aufidius lies: is he in Antium?

41 *in the entertainment*] in receipt of pay, on full allowance. Cf. *All's Well*, IV, i, 14-15: "some band of strangers i' th' adversary's *entertainment*."

8 *lies*] lives, resides.

CIT. He is, and feasts the nobles of the state  
At his house this night.

COR. Which is his house, beseech you? 10

CIT. This, here, before you.

COR. Thank you, sir: farewell.

[Exit Citizen.]

O world, thy slippery turns! Friends now fast sworn,  
Whose double bosoms seem to wear one heart,  
Whose hours, whose bed, whose meal and exercise  
Are still together, who twin, as 't were, in love  
Unseparable, shall within this hour,  
On a dissension of a doit, break out  
To bitterest enmity: so, fellest foes,  
Whose passions and whose plots have broke their sleep  
To take the one the other, by some chance, 20  
Some trick not worth an egg, shall grow dear friends  
And interjoin their issues. So with me:  
My birth-place hate I, and my love's upon  
This enemy town. I'll enter: if he slay me,  
He does fair justice; if he give me way,  
I'll do his country service. [Exit.]

15 *who twin . . . in love*] who love one another like twins. Cf. *Othello*, II, iii, 204: "Though he had *twinn'd* with me."

17 *a dissension of a doit*] a quarrel over a farthing.

21 *Some trick*] Some toy or trifle. Cf. *T. of Shrew*, IV, iii, 67: "A knack, a toy, a *trick*, a baby's cap."

22 *interjoin their issues*] make their children intermarry.

23 *hate I*] Capell's correction of the Folio reading *have I*.

SCENE V — THE SAME

A HALL IN AUFIDIUS'S HOUSE

*Music within. Enter a Servingman*

FIRST SERV. Wine, wine, wine! — What service is here!

I think our fellows are asleep. [Exit.

*Enter another Servingman*

SEC. SERV. Where's Cotus? my master calls for him.  
Cotus! [Exit.

*Enter CORIO LANUS*

COR. A goodly house: the feast smells well; but I  
Appear not like a guest.

*Re-enter the first Servingman*

FIRST SERV. What would you have, friend? whence  
are you? Here's no place for you: pray, go to the door.  
[Exit.

COR. I have deserved no better entertainment,  
In being Coriolanus. 10

*Re-enter second Servingman*

SEC. SERV. Whence are you, sir? Has the porter his  
eyes in his head, that he gives entrance to such compan-  
ions? Pray, get you out.

COR. Away!

12 companions] fellows. Cf. V, ii, 58, *infra*.

SEC. SERV. "Away!" get you away.

COR. Now thou 'rt troublesome.

SEC. SERV. Are you so brave? I'll have you talked  
with anon.

*Enter a third Servingman. The first meets him*

THIRD SERV. What fellow 's this?

FIRST SERV. A strange one as ever I looked on: I <sup>20</sup>  
cannot get him out o' the house: prithee, call my master  
to him. *[Retires.]*

THIRD SERV. What have you to do here, fellow?  
Pray you, avoid the house.

COR. Let me but stand; I will not hurt your hearth.

THIRD SERV. What are you?

COR. A gentleman.

THIRD SERV. A marvellous poor one.

COR. True, so I am.

THIRD SERV. Pray you, poor gentleman, take up <sup>30</sup>  
some other station; here 's no place for you; pray you,  
avoid: come.

COR. Follow your function, go, and batten on cold bits.  
*[Pushes him away from him.]*

THIRD SERV. What, you will not? Prithee, tell my  
master what a strange guest he has here.

SEC. SERV. And I shall. *[Exit.]*

THIRD SERV. Where dwell'st thou?

COR. Under the canopy.

---

<sup>24</sup> *avoid the house*] clear out of the house. So line 31, *infra*.

<sup>33</sup> *batten on cold bits*] feast or gorge on cold leavings, scraps of cold dishes.

<sup>38</sup> *the canopy*] sc. of heaven, the sky. Cf. *Hamlet*, II, ii, 298: "this most  
excellent canopy, the air."

# CORIOLANUS

ACT IV

THIRD SERV. Under the canopy!

COR. Ay.

40

THIRD SERV. Where 's that?

COR. I' the city of kites and crows.

THIRD SERV. I' the city of kites and crows! What an ass it is! Then thou dwell'st with daws too?

COR. No, I serve not thy master.

THIRD SERV. How, sir! do you meddle with my master?

COR. Ay; 't is an honest service than to meddle with thy mistress:

Thou pratest, and pratest; serve with thy trencher, hence!  
[Beats him away. Exit third Servingman.]

*Enter AUFIDIUS with the second Servingman*

AUF. Where is this fellow?

50

SEC. SERV. Here, sir: I'd have beaten him like a dog, but for disturbing the lords within. [Retires.]

AUF. Whence comest thou? what wouldst thou? thy name?

Why speak'st not? speak, man: what's thy name?

COR. [Unmuffling] If, Tullus,  
Not yet thou knowest me, and, seeing me, dost not

Think me for the man I am, necessity  
Commands me name myself.

AUF. What is thy name?

44 daws] jackdaws, in the sense of simpletons, fools.

49 trencher] wooden platter, on which food was cut up for eating purposes.

COR. A name unmusical to the Volscians' ears,  
And harsh in sound to thine.

AUF. Say, what 's thy name?  
Thou hast a grim appearance, and thy face 60  
Bears a command in 't; though thy tackle's torn,  
Thou show'st a noble vessel: what's thy name?

COR. Prepare thy brow to frown:—know'st thou  
me yet?

AUF. I know thee not:—thy name?

COR. My name is Caius Marcius, who hath done  
To thee particularly, and to all the Volscies,  
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may  
My surname Coriolanus: the painful service,  
'The extreme dangers, and the drops of blood 70  
Shed for my thankless country, are requited  
But with that surname; a good memory,  
And witness of the malice and displeasure  
Which thou shouldst bear me: only that name remains:  
The cruelty and envy of the people,  
Permitted by our dastard nobles, who  
Have all forsook me, hath devour'd the rest;  
And suffer'd me by the voice of slaves to be  
Hoop'd out of Rome. Now, this extremity

60–61 *thy face . . . command in 't*] Cf. North's *Plutarch*: "Yet there appeared a certain majesty in his countenance."

65–101 *My name is . . . service*] This speech is adapted with great literalness from North's *Plutarch*.

71 *a good memory*] a good memorial. Cf. V, i, 17, and V, vi, 154, *infra*. The expression is North's.

78 *Hoop'd*] Hooted. Cf. IV, vi, 124, *infra*: "hoot him out of the city." Thus the Folios. Hammer gives the more modern spelling *Whoop'd*.

Hath brought me to thy hearth: not out of hope —  
Mistake me not — to save my life, for if 80  
I had fear'd death, of all the men i' the world  
I would have 'voided thee; but in mere spite,  
To be full quit of those my banishers,  
Stand I before thee here. Then if thou hast  
A heart of wreak in thee, that wilt revenge  
Thine own particular wrongs, and stop those maims  
Of shame seen through thy country, speed thee straight,  
And make my misery serve thy turn: so use it  
That my revengeful services may prove  
As benefits to thee; for I will fight 90  
Against my canker'd country with the spleen  
Of all the under fiends. But if so be  
Thou dar'st not this and that to prove more fortunes  
Thou'rt tired, then, in a word, I also am  
Longer to live most weary, and present  
My throat to thee and to thy ancient malice;  
Which not to cut would show thee but a fool,  
Since I have ever follow'd thee with hate,  
Drawn tuns of blood out of thy country's breast,  
And cannot live but to thy shame, unless 100  
It be to do thee service.

83 *To be full quit of*] To be entirely quits with, to pay out to the full.

85 *A heart of wreak*] A heart seeking revenge. North's expression is  
"if thou hast any heart to be wrecked (*i. e.*, wreaked, avenged) of the  
injuries thy enemies have done thee."

86-87 *maims Of shame*] shameful injuries, the spoliation of thy territory.

91 *canker'd*] malignant.

92 *the under fiends*] the fiends of hell below the earth.

AUF. O Marcius, Marcius!  
Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart  
A root of ancient envy. If Jupiter  
Should from yond cloud speak divine things,  
And say "'T is true," I'd not believe them more  
Than thee, all noble Marcius. Let me twine  
Mine arms about that body, where against  
My grained ash an hundred times hath broke,  
And scarr'd the moon with splinters: here I clip  
The anvil of my sword, and do contest 110  
As hotly and as nobly with thy love  
As ever in ambitious strength I did  
Contend against thy valour. Know thou first,  
I loved the maid I married; never man  
Sigh'd truer breath; but that I see thee here,  
Thou noble thing! more dances my rapt heart  
Than when I first my wedded mistress saw  
Bestride my threshold. Why, thou Mars! I tell thee,  
We have a power on foot; and I had purpose 120  
Once more to hew thy target from thy brawn,  
Or lose mine arm for 't: thou hast beat me out

108 *My grained ash*] My stout ashen spear. "Grained," which has no very definite significance as applied to the grain of wood, means here "unbroken," "strong."

109 *scarr'd the moon with splinters*] Cf. for the hyperbolical figure *Wint. Tale*, III, iii, 89-90: "the ship *boring the moon* with her mainmast."

109-110 *I clip . . . sword*] I embrace the object which I have struck with my sword with the strength of a smith striking an anvil.

119 *a power on foot*] an army in the field.

120 *thy target from thy brawn*] thy shield from thy brawny arm.

121 *out*] outright, thoroughly.



Twelve several times, and I have nightly since  
 Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me;  
 We have been down together in my sleep,  
 Unbuckling helms, fisting each other's throat;  
 And waked half dead with nothing. Worthy Marcius,  
 Had we no quarrel else to Rome but that  
 Thou art thence banish'd, we would muster all  
 From twelve to seventy, and pouring war  
 Into the bowels of ungrateful Rome, 130  
 Like a bold flood o'er-beat. O, come, go in,  
 And take our friendly senators by the hands,  
 Who now are here, taking their leaves of me,  
 Who am prepared against your territories,  
 Though not for Rome itself.

COR. You bless me, gods!

AUF. Therefore, most absolute sir, if thou wilt have  
 The leading of thine own revenges, take  
 The one half of my commission, and set down —  
 As best thou art experienced, since thou know'st  
 Thy country's strength and weakness — thine own  
 ways; 140  
 Whether to knock against the gates of Rome,  
 Or rudely visit them in parts remote,  
 To fright them; ere destroy. But come in:

125 *helms*] helmets.

131 *o'er-beat*] beat down, overwhelm. Thus the Folios. The word is rare. Rowe like most editors reads *o'er-bear*, i. e., overflow, with which cf. IV, vi, 79: "[they] have already *O'erborne* (i. e., overflowed) their way."

136 *absolute*] excellent, perfect. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, I, ii, 2: "most absolute *Alexas*."

Let me commend thee first to those that shall  
 Say yea to thy desires. A thousand welcomes!  
 And more a friend than e'er an enemy;  
 Yet, Marcius, that was much. Your hand: most wel-  
 come! [*Exeunt Coriolanus and Aufidius. The two*  
*Serving-men come forward.*]

FIRST SERV. Here 's a strange alteration!

SEC. SERV. By my hand, I had thought to have  
 stricken him with a cudgel; and yet my mind gave  
 me his clothes made a false report of him. 151

FIRST SERV. What an arm he has! he turned me  
 about with his finger and his thumb, as one would set  
 up a top.

SEC. SERV. Nay, I knew by his face that there was  
 something in him: he had, sir, a kind of face, methought,  
 — I cannot tell how to term it.

FIRST SERV. He had so; looking as it were — Would  
 I were hanged, but I thought there was more in him  
 than I could think.

SEC. SERV. So did I, I'll be sworn: he is simply the  
 rarest man i' the world. 161

FIRST SERV. I think he is: but a greater soldier than  
 he, you wot one.

SEC. SERV. Who? my master?

FIRST SERV. Nay, it's no matter for that.

150-151 *my mind gave me*] my mind suggested, hinted to me. The same  
 expression appears in *Hen. VIII*, V, iii, 109.

153-154 *set up*] set spinning.

163 *you wot one*] you know the man I mean. Thus the Folios. For one  
 many editors substitute *on* ("you wot on" being often used colloquially  
 for "you take my hint"). But no change is necessary here.

# CORIOLANUS

## ACT IV

SEC. SERV. Worth six on him.

FIRST SERV. Nay, not so neither: but I take him to be the greater soldier.

SEC. SERV. Faith, look you, one cannot tell how to say that: for the defence of a town, our general is excellent. 170

FIRST SERV. Ay, and for an assault too.

*Re-enter third Servingman*

THIRD SERV. O slaves, I can tell you news; news, you rascals!

FIRST AND SEC. SERV. What, what, what? let's partake.

THIRD SERV. I would not be a Roman, of all nations; I had as lieve be a condemned man.

FIRST AND SEC. SERV. Wherefore? wherefore?

THIRD SERV. Why, here's he that was wont to thwack our general, Caius Marcius.

FIRST SERV. Why do you say, thwack our general? 180

THIRD SERV. I do not say, thwack our general; but he was always good enough for him.

SEC. SERV. Come, we are fellows and friends: he was ever too hard for him; I have heard him say so himself.

FIRST SERV. He was too hard for him directly, to say

183 *fellows*] companions, fellow-servants.

185 *directly*] possibly "in straightforward encounter," "hand to hand."

The word is elsewhere used in the sense of "immediately" (cf. I, vi, 59, *supra*), and also in that of "manifestly," "obviously." Cf. *Othello*, II, i, 216: "Desdemona is *directly* in love with him."

the troth on 't: before Corioli he scotched him and notched him like a carbonado.

SEC. SERV. An he had been cannibally given, he might have broiled and eaten him too.

FIRST SERV. But, more of thy news?

190

THIRD SERV. Why, he is so made 'on here within as if he were son and heir to Mars; set at upper end o' the table; no question asked him by any of the senators, but they stand bald before him. Our general himself makes a mistress of him; sanctifies himself with 's hand, and turns up the white o' the eye to his discourse. But the bottom of the news is, our general is cut i' the middle, and but one half of what he was yesterday; for the other has half, by the entreaty and grant of the whole table. He'll go, he says, and sowl the porter of Rome gates by the ears: he will mow all down before him, and leave his passage poll'd.

186-187 *he scotched . . . like a carbonado*] hacked and cut about like a piece of meat slashed for broiling.

189 *broiled*] Pope's correction of the obvious Folio misreading *boyld*.

191 *so made on*] made so much of.

194 *bald*] bareheaded.

195 *sanctifies . . . hand*] touches his hand as if it were a holy relic. The reference is probably to the religious ceremony of touching a sanctified relic. Cf. *As you like it*, III, iv, 12-13: "his kissing is as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread."

197 *bottom*] base, essential part.

199 *by the entreaty . . . whole table*] at the request and with the consent of all the company.

200 *sowl*] seize or drag. The word is still common in provincial use.

202 *poll'd*] sheared or stripped bare (by means of plundering raids).

# CORIOLANUS

## ACT IV

SEC. SERV. And he's as like to do't as any man I can imagine. 204

THIRD SERV. Do't! he will do't; for, look you, sir, he has as many friends as enemies; which friends, sir, as it were, durst not, look you, sir, show themselves, as we term it, his friends whilst he's in directitude.

FIRST SERV. Directitude! what's that? 209

THIRD SERV. But when they shall see, sir, his crest up again and the man in blood, they will out of their burrows, like conies after rain, and revel all with him.

FIRST SERV. But when goes this forward?

THIRD SERV. To-morrow; to-day; presently: you shall have the drum struck up this afternoon: 't is, as it were, a parcel of their feast, and to be executed ere they wipe their lips.

SEC. SERV. Why, then we shall have a stirring world again. This peace is nothing, but to rust iron, increase tailors, and breed ba lad-makers. 220

FIRST SERV. Let me have war, say I; it exceeds peace as far as day does night; it's spritely, waking, audible, and full of vent. Peace is a very apoplexy, leth-

208 *directitude*] a blundering malapropism for "discredit." Malone substituted *discredit*.

211 *in blood*] in fighting condition.

216 *a parcel*] a part.

222 *spritely, waking*] Pope's correction of the Folio *sprightly walking* (i. e., quick moving, marching in lively fashion).

223 *full of vent*] full of go, of stir, of energy. This, and the other epithets of the sentence, are the antitheses of the epithets "mull'd, deaf, sleepy, insensible" of the next sentence.

argy, mull'd, deaf, sleepy, insensible; a getter of more bastard children than war's a destroyer of men.

SEC. SERV. 'T is so: and as war, in some sort, may be said to be a ravisher, so it cannot be denied but peace is a great maker of cuckolds.

FIRST SERV. Ay, and it makes men hate one another.

THIRD SERV. Reason; because they then less need one another. The wars for my money. I hope to see Romans as cheap as Volscians. They are rising, they are rising.

FIRST AND SEC. SERV. In, in, in, in! [Exeunt. 233]

### SCENE VI — ROME

#### A PUBLIC PLACE

*Enter the two Tribunes, SICINIUS and BRUTUS*

SIC. We hear not of him, neither need we fear him; His remedies are tame i' the present peace And quietness of the people, which before Were in wild hurry. Here do we make his friends Blush that the world goes well; who rather had, Though they themselves did suffer by't, behold Dissentious numbers pestering streets than see Our tradesmen singing in their shops and going About their functions friendly.

224 *mull'd*] flat, insipid; like wine spoilt by being boiled or over-sweetened.

231 [*for my money*] for my part; a vulgar colloquialism still in use. *Englishmen for My Money* was the name of a play by William Haughton, 1616.

2 *His remedies . . . peace*] His means of redressing his wrongs are ineffectual in a time of peace like this. The Folios omit the preposition 'i', which Theobald supplied.

4 *hurry*] commotion.

BRU. We stood to 't in good time.

*Enter MENENIUS*

Is this Menenius? 40

SIC. 'T is he, 't is he: O, he is grown most kind  
Of late. Hail, sir!

MEN. Hail to you both!

SIC. Your Coriolanus is not much miss'd,  
But with his friends: the commonwealth doth stand;  
And so would do, were he more angry at it.

MEN. All's well; and might have been much better,  
if

He could have temporized.

SIC. Where is he, hear you?

MEN. Nay, I hear nothing: his mother and his wife  
Hear nothing from him.

*Enter three or four Citizens*

CITIZENS. The gods preserve you both!

SIC. God-den, our neighbours. 20

BRU. God-den to you all, god-den to you all.

FIRST CIT. Ourselves, our wives, and children, on  
our knees,

Are bound to pray for you both.

SIC. Live, and thrive!

BRU. Farewell, kind neighbours: we wish'd Corio-  
lanus

Had loved you as we did.

CITIZENS. Now the gods keep you!

BOTH TRI. Farewell, farewell. *[Exeunt Citizens.]*

SIC. This is a happier and more comely time  
Than when these fellows ran about the streets,  
Crying confusion.

BRU. Caius Marcius was  
A worthy officer i' the war, but insolent,  
O'ercome with pride, ambitious past all thinking,  
Self-loving, —

20

SIC. And affecting one sole throne,  
Without assistance.

MEN. I think not so.

SIC. We should by this, to all our lamentation,  
If he had gone forth consul, found it so.

BRU. The gods have well prevented it, and Rome  
Sits safe and still without him.

*Enter an Ædile*

ÆD. Worthy tribunes,  
There is a slave, whom we have put in prison,  
Reports, the Volsces with two several powers  
Are enter'd in the Roman territories,  
And with the deepest malice of the war  
Destroy what lies before 'em.

40

MEN. 'T is Aufidius,  
Who, hearing of our Marcius' banishment,  
Thrusts forth his horns again into the world;  
Which were inshell'd when Marcius stood for Rome,  
And durst not once peep out.

32 *affecting*] aiming at, longing for.

39 *powers*] forces, armies.

44 *his horns*] The figure is from a snail.

45 *for Rome*] in defence of Rome. Cf. *supra*, III, iii, 111 and IV, ii, 28.



SIC. Come, what talk you  
Of Marcius?

BRU. Go see this rumourer whipp'd. It cannot be  
The Volsces dare break with us.

MEN. Cannot be!  
We have record that very well it can, 50  
And three examples of the like have been  
Within my age. But reason with the fellow,  
Before you punish him, where he heard this,  
Lest you shall chance to whip your information,  
And beat the messenger who bids beware  
Of what is to be dreaded.

SIC. Tell not me:  
I know this cannot be.

BRU. Not possible.

*Enter a Messenger*

MESS. The nobles in great earnestness are going  
All to the senate-house: some news is come  
That turns their countenances.

SIC. 'T is this slave; 60  
Go whip him 'fore the people's eyes: his raising;  
Nothing but his report.

MESS. Yes, worthy sir,  
The slave's report is seconded; and more,  
More fearful, is deliver'd.

SIC. What more fearful?

52 *reason with*] converse with.

58 *earnestness*] seriousness, anxiety.

59 *come*] Rowe's correction of the Folio *coming*.

60 *turns*] turns sour or pale.

MESS. It is spoke freely out of many mouths —  
 How probable I do not know — that Marcius,  
 Join'd with Aufidius, leads a power 'gainst Rome,  
 • And vows revenge as spacious as between  
 The young'st and oldest thing.

SIC. This is most likely!

BRU. Raised only, that the weaker sort may wish 70  
 Good Marcius home again.

SIC. The very trick on't.

MEN. This is unlikely:  
 He and Aufidius can no more atone  
 Than violentest contrariety.

*Enter a second Messenger*

SEC. MESS. You are sent for to the senate:  
 A fearful army, led by Caius Marcius  
 Associated with Aufidius, rages  
 Upon our territories; and have already  
 O'erborne their way, consumed with fire, and took  
 What lay before them. 80

*Enter COMINIUS*

COM. O, you have made good work!

MEN. What news? what news?

68-69 *as spacious . . . oldest thing*] so spacious or comprehensive as  
 to involve everybody, from the youngest to the oldest.

73 *atone*] be at one, be reconciled. The intransitive use of the verb  
 is rare. But cf. *As you like it*, V, iv, 103-104: "earthly things  
 . . . Atone together."

79 *O'erborne their way*] Overflowed their boundaries. Cf. note on IV,  
 v, 131, *supra*.

COM. You have help to ravish your own daughters,  
and

To melt the city leads upon your pates;  
To see your wives dishonour'd to your noses, —

MEN. What 's the news? what 's the news?

COM. Your temples burned in their cement, and  
Your franchises, whereon you stood, confined  
Into an auger's bore.

MEN. Pray now, your news? —  
You have made fair work, I fear me. — Pray, your  
news? —

If Marcius should be join'd with Volscians, —

COM. If! 90

He is their god: he leads them like a thing  
Made by some other deity than nature,  
That shapes man better; and they follow him,  
Against us brats, with no less confidence  
Than boys pursuing summer butterflies,  
Or butchers killing flies.

MEN. You have made good work,  
You and your apron-men; you that stood so much

83 *leads*] *sc.* of the roofs, leaden coverings of the roofs.

86 *in their cement*] into their cement, till the fire crumbles even the cement  
between the stones.

87-88 *Your franchises . . . bore*] Your rights, on which you plumed  
yourselves, reduced to the narrowest compass. The bore or hole made  
by an auger was minute.

94 *brats*] weaklings, feeble as children.

95 *butterflies*] The word is sometimes spelt by Elizabethan writers "butter  
flees," on which account the repetition of "flies" in the next line  
probably went unobserved.

97 *your apron-men*] your mechanics.

Upon the voice of occupation and  
The breath of garlic-eaters!

COM. He'll shake your Rome about your ears.

MEN.

As Hercules

Did shake down mellow fruit. You have made fair  
work!

101

BRU. But is this true, sir?

COM.

Ay; and you'll look pale

Before you find it other. All the regions

Do smilingly revolt; and who resist

Are mock'd for valiant ignorance,

And perish constant fools. Who is 't can blame him?

Your enemies and his find something in him.

MEN. We are all undone, unless

The noble man have mercy.

COM.

Who shall ask it?

The tribunes cannot do't for shame; the people

110

Deserve such pity of him as the wolf

Does of the shepherds: for his best friends, if they

98 *the voice of occupation*] the approval or votes of the working class. Cf.

IV, i, 14, *supra*, and note.

99 *garlic-eaters*] a common phrase of contempt for the lowest orders, with their offensively smelling breath.

100-101 *As Hercules . . . mellow fruit*] A farcical allusion to the story of one of Hercules' twelve labours which required him to gather golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides. According to the commonest version of the tale, Hercules performed this exploit vicariously, and induced Atlas to gather the apples for him.

104 *smilingly*] complaisantly. Thus the Folios. No change is needful.

105 *valiant ignorance*] Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, III, iii, 307: "such a *valiant ignorance*."

106 *perish constant fools*] perish as obstinate men foolishly braving impossibilities.

Should say "Be good to Rome," they charged him even  
As those should do that had deserved his hate,  
And therein show'd like enemies.

MEN.

'T is true:

If he were putting to my house the brand  
That should consume it, I have not the face  
To say "Beseech you, cease." You have made fair  
hands,

You and your crafts! you have crafted fair!

COM.

You have brought

A trembling upon Rome, such as was never 120  
So incapable of help.

BOTH TRI.

Say not, we brought it.

MEN. How! was it we? we loved him; but, like beasts  
And cowardly nobles, gave way unto your clusters,  
Who did hoot him out o' the city.

COM.

But I fear

They'll roar him in again. Tullus Aufidius,  
The second name of men, obeys his points  
As if he were his officer: desperation  
Is all the policy, strength and defence,  
That Rome can make against them.

113-115 *they charged . . . like enemies*] The main verbs ("charged" and "show'd") are here in the conditional mood. The sentence means that they would urge on him a charge or injunction, like men who had deserved his hatred, and they would assume the outward guise of enemies.

118 *fair hands*] a pretty piece of handiwork.

126 *his points*] his points of command, his commands. Cf. *Tempest*, I, ii, 500: "do All *points* of my command." A "point of war" commonly meant a bugle call. Cf. *2 Hen. IV*, IV, i, 52: "a loud trumpet and a *point of war*."

*Enter a troop of Citizens*

MEN.

Here come the clusters.

And is Aufidius with him? You are they 130

• That made the air unwholesome, when you cast  
Your stinking greasy caps in hooting at  
Coriolanus' exile. Now he's coming;  
And not a hair upon a soldier's head  
Which will not prove a whip: as many coxcombs  
As you threw caps up will he tumble down,  
And pay you for your voices. 'Tis no matter;  
If he could burn us all into one coal,  
We have deserved it.

CITIZENS. Faith, we hear fearful news.

FIRST CIT.

For mine own part,

When I said, banish him, I said, 't was pity. 141

SEC. CIT. And so did I.

THIRD CIT. And so did I; and, to say the truth, so  
did very many of us: that we did, we did for the best;  
and though we willingly consented to his banishment,  
yet it was against our will.

COM. Ye're goodly things, you voices!

MEN.

You have made

Good work, you and your cry! Shall's to the Capitol?

COM. O, ay, what else? [*Exeunt Cominius and Menenius.*]

SIC. Go, masters, get you home; be not dismay'd. 150  
These are a side that would be glad to have  
This true which they so seem to fear. Go home,  
And show no sign of fear.

# CORIOLANUS

## ACT IV

FIRST CIT. The gods be good to us! Come, masters, let's home. I ever said we were i' the wrong when we banished him.

SEC. CIT. So did we all. But, come, let's home. *[Exeunt Citizens.]*

BRU. I do not like this news.

SIC. Nor I.

BRU. Let's to the Capitol: would half my wealth 160  
Would buy this for a lie!

SIC. Pray, let us go. *[Exeunt.]*

### SCENE VII—A CAMP AT A SMALL DISTANCE FROM ROME

*Enter AUFIDIUS with his Lieutenant*

AUF. Do they still fly to the Roman?

LIEU. I do not know what witchcraft's in him, but  
Your soldiers use him as the grace 'fore meat,  
Their talk at table and their thanks at end;  
And you are darken'd in this action, sir,  
Even by your own.

AUF. I cannot help it now,  
Unless, by using means, I lame the foot  
Of our design. He bears himself more proudlier,  
Even to my person, than I thought he would  
When first I did embrace him: yet his nature 10  
In that's no changeling; and I must excuse  
What cannot be amended.

5 *darken'd*] thrown into the shade. \*

8 *more proudlier*] The double comparative was a common mode of expressing emphasis.

LIEU. Yet I wish, sir —  
I mean for your particular — you had not  
Join'd in commission with him; but either  
Had borne the action of yourself, or else  
To him had left it solely.

AUF. I understand thee well; and 'be thou sure,  
When he shall come to his account, he knows not  
What I can urge against him. Although it seems,  
And so he thinks, and is no less apparent  
To the vulgar eye, that he bears all things fairly,  
And shows good husbandry for the Volscian state,  
Fights dragon-like, and does achieve as soon  
As draw his sword, yet he hath left undone  
That which shall break his neck or hazard mine,  
Whene'er we come to our account.

LIEU. Sir, I beseech you, think you he'll carry Rome?

AUF. All places yield to him ere he sits down;  
And the nobility of Rome are his:

13 *for your particular*] in your own personal interest.

15 *Had borne*] Pope's correction of the Folio reading *haue borne*.

22 *shows good husbandry*] shows good management.

24-26 *yet he hath left . . . our account*] These lines clearly mean that Coriolanus' omission of some unspecified act is certain to imperil his own life and that of Aufidius. Mr. Craig ingeniously suggested that Shakespeare was here obscurely alluding to a passage in Plutarch, where Coriolanus was credited, in his invasion of Roman territory, with thoroughly despoiling the property of the poor, but with abstaining from injuring noblemen's lands and goods. Aufidius might perceive future danger in this gentle treatment of the wealthier Romans. But Shakespeare failed to develop this hint of Plutarch, and a later reference in the play (V, i, 22 *seq.*) almost suggests that the dramatist deliberately ignored it.

27 *carry*] conquer, take. Cf. V, vi, 43, *infra*.



The senators and patricians love him too: 30  
 The tribunes are no soldiers; and their people  
 Will be as rash in the repeal, as hasty  
 To expel him thence. I think he'll be to Rome  
 As is the osprey to the fish, who takes it  
 By sovereignty of nature. First he was  
 A noble servant to them; but he could not  
 Carry his honours even: whether 't was pride,  
 Which out of daily fortune ever taints  
 The happy man; whether defect of judgement, 40  
 To fail in the disposing of those chances  
 Which he was lord of; or whether nature,  
 Not to be other than one thing, not moving  
 From the casque to the cushion, but commanding peace  
 Even with the same austerity and garb  
 As he controll'd the war; but one of these —  
 As he hath spices of them all, not all,

34-35 *As is the osprey . . . nature*] Fish are said to make no sort of resistance to the attack of the osprey (which the Folios spell *Aspray*) but turn on their backs and surrender to the bird without a struggle. Cf. *Two Noble Kinsmen*, I, i, 138-139: "As *ospreys* do the fish subdue before they touch."

39 *happy*] prosperous, fortunate.

41-43 *nature . . . cushion*] a stubborn uniformity of nature which could not fittingly make the transition from the soldier's helmet to the civil magistrate's armchair.

45 *controll'd the war*] exercised control in war-time.

46 *spices of them all*] Aufidius credits Coriolanus with some taste of the three several vices which he has imputed to him, *viz.*, the pride that comes of success, inability to make good use of the fruits of victory, and lack of power to accommodate his habit of military command to the exercise of civil authority.

For I dare so far free him — made him fear'd,  
 So hated, and so banish'd: but he has a merit,  
 To choke it in the utterance. So our virtues  
 Lie in the interpretation of the time;  
 And power, unto itself most commendable,  
 Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair  
 To extol what it hath done.  
 One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail;  
 Rights by rights fouler, strengths by strengths do fail.

50

48-49 *he has a merit . . . utterance*] his merit is such as ought to choke the utterance of censure. "It" would imply the general obloquy to which Coriolanus had been exposed. Some would, less convincingly, limit the object of "choke" to the sentence of banishment.

49-50 *So our virtues . . . the time*] So our virtues depend for their estimation on the way in which they are adapted to the circumstances of the time. The virtues that suit war may come to be viewed as vices in time of peace. This explanation of the words seems to suit the context better than to treat them as meaning that virtues exist only in the opinion held of them by contemporaries, *i. e.*, virtues have no permanently intrinsic value.

51-53 *And power . . . it hath done*] The general meaning of these difficult lines is: And power, though meritoriously earned and rightly generating self-satisfaction, is liable to no graver ruin than what comes of self-laudation. "A chair to extol what it hath done" means "a chair of state," or "a rostrum from which to deliver speeches of self-glorification." The sentiment is identical with that in *Troil. and Cress.*, I, iii, 241-242: "The worthiness of praise distains his worth, If that the praised himself bring the praise forth," and *All's Well*, I, iii, 5-7: "we . . . make foul the clearness of our deservings, when of ourselves we publish them."

54 *One fire . . . fire*] A favourite proverbial expression in Shakespeare. Cf. *Jul. Cæs.*, III, i, 172: "As fire drives out fire," and note.

55 *Rights by rights fouler . . . fail*] Thus the Folios. The construction is very obscure and irregular. The verb at the end "do fail" must

## CORIOLANUS

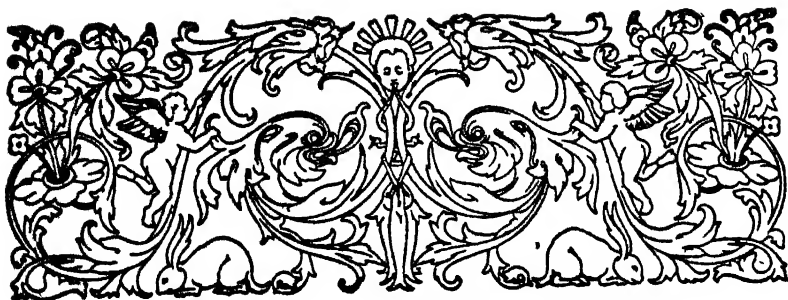
## ACT IV

Come, let 's away. When, Caius, Rome is thine,  
Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine.

---

[*Exeunt.*]

be governed by "rights" as well as "strengths." As it stands, the line means that just rights or titles fail in the presence of rights or titles which are of worse validity, and strengths of one kind succumb to strengths of another. It would, however, seem reasonable here to regard *fouler* as a misprint, and to accept Dyce's happy emendation of *faller*.

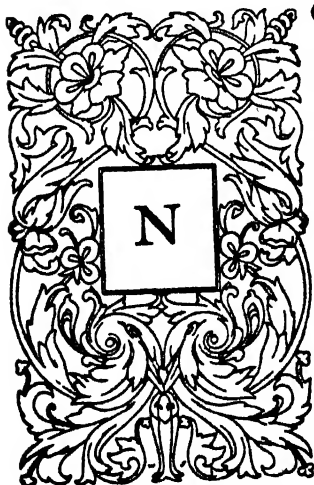


ACT FIFTH — SCENE 1 — ROME

A PUBLIC PLACE

*Enter MENENIUS, COMINIUS, SICINIUS and BRUTUS, the two  
Tribunes, with others*

MENENIUS



O, I'LL NOT GO: YOU  
hear what he hath said  
Which was sometime his general,  
who loved him  
In a most dear particular. He  
call'd me father:  
But what o' that? Go, you  
that banish'd him;  
A mile before his tent fall down,  
and knee  
The way into his mercy: nay,  
if he coy'd  
To hear Cominius speak, I'll  
keep at home.

Com. He would not seem to know me.

MEN.

Do you hear?

2 Which] Who; the antecedent is "he," i. e., Cominius (line 1).

COM. Yet one time he did call me by my name:  
 I urged our old acquaintance, and the drops 10  
 That we have bled together. Coriolanus  
 He would not answer to: forbad all names;  
 He was a kind of nothing, titleless,  
 Till he had forgèd himself a name o' the fire  
 Of burning Rome.

MEN. Why, so: you have made good work!  
 A pair of tribunes that have rack'd for Rome,  
 To make coals cheap: a noble memory!

COM. I minded him how royal 't was to pardon  
 When it was less expected: he replied,  
 It was a bare petition of a state 20  
 To one whom they had punish'd.

MEN. Very well:  
 Could he say less?

COM. I offer'd to awaken his regard  
 For 's private friends: his answer to me was,  
 He could not stay to pick them in a pile

3 *In a most dear particular*] In a most affectionate and private intimacy.

6-7 *coy'd To hear*] was coy of hearing, was reluctant to hear.

12 *forbad all names*] declined to respond to any name.

14 *o' the fire*] out of the fire.

16 *rack'd for Rome*] striven for, strained every nerve for, Rome. Cf. *Merch.*  
*of Ven.*, I, i, 181: "(My credit) . . . shall be rack'd, even to the  
 uttermost." Thus Pope. The Folios read *wrack'd for Rome* which  
 Dyce changed, quite needlessly, into *wreck'd fair Rome*.

17 *To make coals cheap*] With the result of cheapening fuel by making Rome  
 itself material for fire.

*memory*] memorial. Cf. IV, v, 71, *supra*.

20 *a bare petition*] a threadbare request, a petition of no substance.

25 *in a pile*] from, or out of, a heap.

Of noisome musty chaff: he said, 't was folly,  
For one poor grain or two, to leave unburnt,  
And still to nose the offence.

MEN. For one poor grain or two!  
I am one of those; his mother, wife, his child,  
And this brave fellow too, we are the grains: 30  
You are the musty chaff, and you are smelt  
Above the moon: we must be burnt for you.

SIC. Nay, pray, be patient: if you refuse your aid  
In this so never-needed help, yet do not  
Upbraid's with our distress. But sure, if you  
Would be your country's pleader, your good tongue,  
More than the instant army we can make,  
Might stop our countryman.

MEN. No, I 'll not meddle.

SIC. Pray you, go to him.

MEN. What should I do?

BRU. Only make trial what your love can do 40  
For Rome, towards Marcius.

MEN. Well, and say that Marcius  
Return me, as Cominius is return'd,  
Unheard; what then?  
But as a discontented friend, grief-shot  
With his unkindness? say 't be so?

28 *nose the offence*] suffer the annoyance, endure the disagreeable odour  
of the undestroyed offensive matter.

32 *Above the moon*] Skyhigh.

37 *the instant army we can make*] the army we can raise on the instant.

41 *towards Marcius*] in regard to Coriolanus.

44 *grief-shot*] grief-stricken.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT V

SIC. Yet your good will  
Must have that thanks from Rome, after the measure  
As you intended well.

MEN. I 'll undertake 't:  
I think he 'll hear me. Yet, to bite his lip  
And hum at good Cominius, much unhearts me.  
He was not taken well; he had not dined: 50  
The veins unfill'd, our blood is cold, and then  
We pout upon the morning, are unapt  
To give or to forgive; but when we have stuff'd  
These pipes and these conveyances of our blood  
With wine and feeding, we have suppler souls  
Than in our priest-like fasts: therefore I'll watch him  
Till he be dieted to my request,  
And then I'll set upon him.

BRU. You know the very road into his kindness,  
And cannot lose your way.

MEN. Good faith, I'll prove him, 60  
Speed how it will. I shall ere long have knowledge  
Of my success. [Exit.]

46-47 *after the measure . . . well*] in proportion to the goodness of your intention.

49 *hum*] mutter without speaking a word. Cf. *Macb.*, III, vi, 41-42:  
"The cloudy messenger turns me his back, And hums."

50 *taken well*] approached at a favourable moment

52 *We pout upon the morning*] We are surly and sullen in the early morning.

57 *dieted to my request*] well fed so as to be in a humour to grant my request.

60 *prove*] make proof or trial of.

62 *my success*] the result of my effort.

COM. He 'll never hear him.

SIC. Not?

COM. I tell you, he does sit in gold, his eye  
 •Red as 't would burn Rome; and his injury  
 The gaoler to his pity. I kneel'd before him;  
 'T was very faintly he said "Rise;" dismiss'd me  
 Thus, with his speechless hand: what he would do,  
 He sent in writing after me; what he would not,  
 Bound with an oath to yield to his conditions:  
 So that all hope is vain,  
 Unless his noble mother, and his wife;  
 Who, as I hear, mean to solicit him

70

63 *sit in gold*] sit enthroned in imperial splendour. According to Plutarch, Coriolanus sat in the Volscian camp "in his chair of state with a marvellous and unspeakable majesty." Cf. V, iv, 21, *infra*: "he sits in his state."

64-65 *his injury . . . pity*] the feeling of the wrong done him restrained his pity, kept it under lock and key.

68-69 *what he would not . . . conditions*] The construction is difficult. These words with this punctuation must summarise the effect of the message which Coriolanus sent in writing after Cominius. He announced in effect that he would do nothing, he would not make reasonable terms, being bound by oath to make his fellow-countrymen yield to his harsh conditions. Cf. V, ii, 47-48, *infra*: "our general has sworn you out of reprieve and pardon." "Yield" is used with a rare causative significance. Coriolanus again (V, iii, 14, *infra*) refers to "the first conditions" which he offered the Romans for them to reject, and some lines below in the same scene (ll. 80 *seq.*) he specifies the things he has "forsworn to grant" as dismissal of his soldiers, and making terms of surrender with "Rome's mechanics."

71 *Unless his noble mother*] Unless (there be hope in) his noble mother.



# CORIOLANUS

ACT V

For mercy to his country. Therefore, let 's hence.  
And with our fair entreaties haste them on. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE II — ENTRANCE TO THE VOLSCIAN CAMP BEFORE ROME

### TWO SENTINELS ON GUARD

*Enter to them, MENENIUS*

FIRST SEN. Stay: whence are you?

SEC. SEN. Stand, and go back.

MEN. You guard like men; 't is well: but, by your leave,

I am an officer of state, and come  
To speak with Coriolanus.

FIRST SEN. From whence?

MEN. From Rome.

FIRST SEN. You may not pass, you must return:  
our general

Will no more hear from thence.

SEC. SEN. You 'll see your Rome embraced with fire,  
before

You 'll speak with Coriolanus.

MEN. Good my friends,

If you have heard your general talk of Rome,

And of his friends there, it is lots to blanks

My name hath touch'd your ears: it is Menenius.

FIRST SEN. Be it so; go back: the virtue of your  
name

Is not here passable.

10 *lots to blanks*] any number of prizes to any number of blanks. Cf.

*Rich. III.*, I, ii, 237: "all the world to nothing."

MEN.

I tell thee, fellow,  
 Thy general is my lover: I have been  
 The book of his good acts, whence men have read  
 His fame unparallel'd haply amplified;  
 For I have ever verified my friends,  
 Of whom he 's chief, with all the size that verity  
 Would without lapsing suffer: nay, sometimes,  
 Like to a bowl upon a subtle ground,  
 I have tumbled past the throw, and in his praise  
 Have almost stamp'd the leasing: therefore, fellow,  
 I must have leave to pass.

20

FIRST SEN. Faith, sir, if you had told as many lies in his behalf as you have uttered words in your own, you should not pass here; no, though it were as virtuous to lie as to live chastely. Therefore go back.

MEN. Prithee, fellow, remember my name is Menenius, always factionary on the party of your general.

SEC. SEN. Howsoever you have been his liar, as so you say you have, I am one that, telling true under him, must say, you cannot pass. Therefore go back.

14 *lover*] dear friend; a common usage. Cf. *Jul. Cas.*, III, ii, 13: "Romans, countrymen, and *lovers*."

15 *The book*] The recorder or reporter.

17 *verified*] supported by true testimony, spoken the truth of. The word is not known elsewhere in this sense, and *glorified* and *magnified* have been suggested in its place.

20-22 *upon a subtle ground . . . leasing*] upon a deceptive bowling green, I have gone beyond the mark, and in my praise of him almost given the stamp of my authority to lying. "Leasing" is an archaic word for "lie" or "lying." Cf. *Psalms*, iv, 2: "How long will ye . . . seek after *leasing*?" and *Tw. Night*, I, v, 91.

29 *factionary*] busy, active.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT V

MEN. Has he dined, canst thou tell? for I would not speak with him till after dinner.

FIRST SEN. You are a Roman, are you?

MEN. I am, as thy general is.

FIRST SEN. Then you should hate Rome, as he does. Can you, when you have pushed out your gates the very defender of them, and, in a violent popular ignorance, given your enemy your shield, think to front his revenges with the easy groans of old women, the virginal palms of your daughters, or with the palsied intercession of such a decayed dotant as you seem to be? Can you think to blow out the intended fire your city is ready to flame in, with such weak breath as this? No, you are deceived; therefore, back to Rome, and prepare for your execution: you are condemned; our general has sworn you out of reprieve and pardon.

MEN. Sirrah, if thy captain knew I were here, he would use me with estimation. 50

FIRST SEN. Come, my captain knows you not.

MEN. I mean, thy general.

FIRST SEN. My general cares not for you. Back, I say, go; lest I let forth your half-pint of blood; — back, — that 's the utmost of your having: — back.

MEN. Nay, but, fellow, fellow, —

---

40-41 *front his revenges*] meet, resist his vengeance.

41 *easy*] easily uttered, and therefore unworthy of notice.

*virginal palms*] innocent hands raised in supplication. Cf. *2 Hen. VI*, V, ii, 52: "tears *virginal*."

43 *dotant*] dotard.

50 *estimation*] respect.

55 *the utmost of your having*] the utmost you will get.

*Enter CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS*

COR. What 's the matter?

MEN. Now, you companion, I'll say an errand for you : you shall know now that I am in estimation ; you shall perceive that a Jack guardant cannot office me from my son Coriolanus : guess, but by my entertainment with him, if thou standest not i' the state of hanging, or of some death more long in spectatorship and crueller in suffering ; behold now presently, and swoon for what's to come upon thee. The glorious gods sit in hourly synod about thy particular prosperity, and love thee no worse than thy old father Menenius does ! O my son, my son ! thou art preparing fire for us ; look thee, here's water to quench it. I was hardly moved to come to thee ; but being assured none but myself could move thee, I have been blown out of your gates with sighs ; and conjure thee to pardon Rome and thy petitionary

58 *companion*] fellow. Cf. IV, v, 12, *supra*.

*I'll say an errand for you*] I'll make a report of you, deliver a message in your behalf ; in other words, I'll tell of your behaviour to me.

60 *a Jack guardant cannot office me*] a Jack on guard cannot keep me by his officiousness "A Jack guardant" is almost equivalent to "a Jack in office." "Office" as a verb is rare.

61 *but by*] *by* is Malone's insertion in the Folio text.

63 *in spectatorship*] in the act of beholding, from the sightseer's point of view.

65-66 *The glorious gods . . . synod*] Cf. *Pericles*, I, i, 10: "The senate house of planets all did sit." Menenius is here addressing Coriolanus.

71 *your gates*] the gates of your city Rome. For *your gates*, the reading of the first three Folios, the Fourth Folio reasonably substitutes *our gates*.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT V

countrymen. The good gods assuage thy wrath, and turn the dregs of it upon this varlet here, — this, who, like a block, hath denied my access to thee.

COR. Away!

MEN. How! away!

COR. Wife, mother, child, I know not. My affairs  
Are servanted to others: though I owe  
My revenge properly, my remission lies 80  
In Volscian breasts. That we have been familiar,  
Ingrate forgetfulness shall poison rather  
Than pity note how much. Therefore be gone.  
Mine ears against your suits are stronger than  
Your gates against my force. Yet, for I loved thee,  
Take this along; I writ it for thy sake,  
And would have sent it. [*Gives him a letter.*] Another  
word, Menenius,

I will not hear thee speak. This man, Aufidius,  
Was my beloved in Rome: yet thou behold'st.

AUF. You keep a constant temper. 90

[*Exeunt Coriolanus and Aufidius.*]

FIRST SEN. Now, sir, is your name Menenius?

SEC. SEN. 'T is a spell, you see, of much power: you know the way home again.

79 *Are servanted to*] Are made servants to, serve.

79-81 *though I owe . . . breasts*] though my revenge is my personal right, the power of pardon (is no affair of mine, but) is the business of the Volscians.

82-83 *Ingrate forgetfulness . . . how much*] The forgetfulness of ingratitude shall kill as by poison rather than that pity should give any sign of what the amount of our intimacy was.

90 *a constant temper*] a temper of firm faith to your new friends.

FIRST SEN. Do you hear how we are shent for keeping your greatness back?

93

SEC. SEN. What cause, do you think, I have to swoon?

MEN. I neither care for the world nor your general: for such things as you, I can scarce think there's any, ye're so slight. He that hath a will to die by himself fears it not from another: let your general do his worst. 109 For you, be that you are, long; and your misery increase with your age! I say to you, as I was said to, Away!

[Exit.]

FIRST SEN. A noble fellow, I warrant him.

SEC. SEN. The worthy fellow is our general: he's the rock, the oak not to be wind-shaken. [Exeunt.]

### SCENE III — THE TENT OF CORIOLANUS

*Enter CORIOLANUS, AUFIDIUS, and others*

COR. We will before the walls of Rome to-morrow Set down our host. My partner in this action, You must report to the Volscian lords how plainly I have borne this business.

AUF. Only their ends You have respected; stopp'd your ears against The general suit of Rome; never admitted A private whisper, no, not with such friends That thought them sure of you.

94 *shent*] shamed, rebuked; an archaic word.

99 *die by himself*] die by his own hand.

3 *plainly*] honestly, without subterfuge.

**ACT V**

*Enter, in mourning habits, VIRGILIA, VOLUMNIA, leading young  
MARCIVS, VALERIA, and Attendants*

14 *The first conditions*] Cf. V, i, 68–69, *supra*, and note

Plough Rome, and harrow Italy: I 'll never  
Be such a gosling to obey instinct; but stand,  
As if a man were author of himself  
And knew no other kin.

VIR. My lord and husband!

COR. These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome.

VIR. The sorrow that delivers us thus changed  
Makes you think so.

COR. Like a dull actor now 40  
I have forgot my part and I am out,  
Even to a full disgrace. Best of my flesh,  
Forgive my tyranny; but do not say,  
For that "Forgive our Romans." O, a kiss  
Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!  
Now, by the jealous queen of heaven, that kiss  
I carried from thee, dear, and my true lip  
Hath virgin'd it e'er since. You gods! I prate,  
And the most noble mother of the world  
Leave unsaluted: sink, my knee, i' the earth; [*Kneels.* 50

---

38-40 *These eyes . . . think so*] Coriolanus means that his disposition is changed, that he looks on things differently. Virgilia interprets his use of the word "eyes" quite literally, and explains his imagined failure of eyesight to the change wrought in the appearance and dress of herself and her companions.

41-42 *I am out . . . disgrace*] I have broken down to my complete disgrace. Cf. *Sonnet* xxiii, i, 2: "As an unperfect actor . . . is put besides his part." For this use of "out," cf. *I. L. L.*, V, ii, 172: "They do not mark me and that brings me out."

46 *the jealous queen of heaven*] Juno whom the Romans regarded as the goddess of marriage and the avenger of connubial infidelity. Cf. *Pericles*, II, iii 30: "By Juno that is queen of marriage."

48 *I prate*] Theobald's correction of the Folio reading *I pray*.



Of thy deep duty more impression show  
Than that of common sons.

VOL. O, stand up blest!  
Whilst, with no softer cushion than the flint,  
I kneel before thee, and unproperly  
Show duty, as mistaken all this while  
Between the child and parent.

[*Kneels.*

COR. What is this?  
Your knees to me? to your corrected son?  
Then let the pebbles on the hungry beach  
Fillip the stars; then let the mutinous winds  
Strike the proud cedars 'gainst the fiery sun,  
Murdering impossibility, to make  
What cannot be, slight work.

60

VOL. Thou art my warrior;  
I help to frame thee. Do you know this lady?

COR. The noble sister of Publicola,  
The moon of Rome; chaste as the icicle

58 *hungry*] sterile, barren; as in "*hungry soil*." There is no need to give the word the meaning of "cruel," "*hungry for shipwrecks*." The insignificance and worthlessness of the pebbles is the essential point.

59 *Fillip the stars*] Smite the stars. The figure is of the worthless pebbles violently lifted to the height of the stars.

61 *Murdering impossibility*] Annihilating impossibility, making everything possible.

63 *help*] the archaic form of "helped." Cf. V, vi, 36, *infra*.

64 *The noble sister of Publicola*] Plutarch describes Valeria, sister of an eminent Roman general, M. Valerius Publius (surnamed Publicola), as "greatly honoured and revered among all the Romans." According to Plutarch, she suggested the present deputation.

65 *The moon of Rome*] Diana, the goddess of chastity, was also goddess of the moon.

That's curdied by the frost from purest snow  
And hangs on Dian's temple: dear Valeria!

- VOL. This is a poor epitome of yours,  
Which by the interpretation of full time  
May show like all yourself.

CQR. The god of soliders, 70  
With the consent of supreme Jove, inform  
Thy thoughts with nobleness, that thou mayst prove  
To shame invulnerable, and stick i' the wars  
Like a great sea-mark, standing every flaw  
And saving those that eye thee!

VOL. Your knee, sirrah.

COR. That's my brave boy!

VOL. Even he, your wife, this lady and myself  
Are suitors to you.

COR. I beseech you, peace:  
Or, if you'd ask, remember this before:  
The thing I have forsworn to grant may never 80  
Be held by you denials. Do not bid me

66 *curdied*] congealed. Thus the Folios. Rowe substituted *curdled*, which may be right.

68-70 *This is a poor epitome . . . yourself*] This is a miniature copy of you which in the full development of time may present a complete image of yourself. Volumnia is, of course, speaking of her little grandson.

73 *stick*] remain steadfast.

74 *a great sea-mark, standing every flaw*] a beacon at sea, resisting every squall.

80-81 *The thing . . . denials*] You must not reckon me to deny to you personally the thing my oath forbids me granting anybody.

81 *denials*] Thus the first three Folios. The Fourth reads more reasonably *denial*. Capell retained *denials*, but substituted *things* for *thing* in line 80.

# CORIOLANUS

**ACT V**

Dismiss my soldiers, or capitulate  
Again with Rome's mechanics: tell me not  
Wherein I seem unnatural: desire not  
To allay my rages and revenges with  
Your colder reasons.

VOL. O, no more, no more!  
 You have said you will not grant us any thing;  
 For we have nothing else to ask, but that  
 Which you deny already: yet we will ask;  
 That, if you fail in our request, the blame  
 May hang upon your hardness: therefore hear us.

COR. Aufidius, and you Volsces, mark; for we'll  
Hear nought from Rome in private. Your request?

VOL. Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment  
And state of bodies would bewray what life  
We have led since thy exile. Think with thyself  
How more unfortunate than all living women  
Are we come hither : since that thy sight, which should  
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance with  
                comforts,  
Constrains them weep and shake with fear and sorrow ;

82 *capitulate*] come to terms, negotiate.

85 *allay*] moderate, mitigate. Cf. II, i, 44, *supra*: "*allaying* Tiber."

90 *fail in*] fail to grant.

91 *hardness*] harshness, obduracy.

94-189 *Should we be silent . . . mortal to him*] The whole of this passage closely follows, though with some dramatic modification and amplification, the words of North's *Plutarch*.

95 *bewray*] betray, display.

100 Constrains . . . shake] Constrains the eye to weep and the heart to shake.

Making the mother, wife and child, to see 101  
 The son, the husband and the father, tearing  
 His country's bowels out. And to poor we  
 Thine enmity's most capital: thou barr'st us  
 Our prayers to the gods, which is a comfort  
 That all but we enjoy; for how can we,  
 Alas, how can we for our country pray,  
 Whereto we are bound, together with thy victory,  
 Whereto we are bound? alack, or we must lose  
 The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person, 110  
 Our comfort in the country. We must find  
 An evident calamity, though we had  
 Our wish, which side should win; for either thou  
 Must, as a foreign recreant, be led  
 With manacles thorough our streets, or else  
 Triumphantly tread on thy country's ruin,  
 And bear the palm for having bravely shed  
 Thy wife and children's blood. For myself, son,  
 I purpose not to wait on fortune till  
 These wars determine: if I cannot persuade thee 120  
 Rather to show a noble grace to both parts  
 Than seek the end of one, thou shalt no sooner  
 March to assault thy country than to tread —

114 *recreant*] traitor.

115 *thorough*] Johnson's awkward change, for the sake of the metre, of the Folio reading *through*. It is better to retain *through* and leave the line short of a foot, pronouncing "manacles" as a dissyllable and pausing before "or."

120 *determine*] end, conclude.

121 *both parts*] both parties, both sides.

**ACT V**

VIR.

Ay, and mine,

Boy.

**A' shall not tread on me;**

**COR.** Not of a woman's tenderness to be,

130

I have sat too long.

[*Rising.*

**VOL.**

Nay, go not from us thus.

If it were so that our request did tend  
To save the Romans, thereby to destroy  
The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us,  
As poisonous of your honour: no; our suit  
Is, that you reconcile them: while the Volsces  
May say "This mercy we have show'd," the Romans,  
"This we received;" and each in either side  
Give the all-hail to thee, and cry "Be blest  
For making up this peace!" Thou know'st, great son,  
The end of war's uncertain, but this certain, 141  
That if thou conquer Rome, the benefit  
Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name  
Whose repetition will be dogg'd with curses;  
Whose chronicle thus writ: "The man was noble,  
But with his last attempt he wiped it out,  
Destroy'd his country, and his name remains

139 *the all-hail*] the full note of greeting.

146 *with his last attempt . . . out]* with his last enterprise he cancelled  
his noble reputation.

To the ensuing age abhorr'd." Speak to me, son:  
 Thou hast affected the fine strains of honour,  
 To imitate the graces of the gods; 150  
 , To tear with thunder the wide cheeks o' the air,  
 And yet to charge thy sulphur with a bolt  
 That should but rive an oak. Why dost not speak?  
 Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man  
 Still to remember wrongs? Daughter, speak you:  
 He cares not for your weeping. Speak thou, boy:  
 Perhaps thy childishness will move him more  
 Than can our reasons. There's no man in the world  
 More bound to 's mother, yet here he lets me prate  
 Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life 160  
 Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy;  
 When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,  
 Has cluck'd thee to the wars, and safely home,  
 Loaden with honour. Say my request's unjust,  
 And spurn me back: but if it be not so,  
 Thou art not honest, and the gods will plague thee,  
 That thou restrain'st from me the duty which  
 To a mother's part belongs. He turns away:

149 *the fine strains*] the refined and generous impulses. Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, II, ii, 154: "so degenerate a *strain* as this."

152 *charge thy sulphur*] charge thy lightning (which preceded and was thought to propel the thunderbolt). *Charge* is Theobald's correction of the Folio reading *change*. The figure is of the divine omnipotence which can rend asunder the air of heaven, and yet can be satisfied with the comparatively insignificant labour of splitting an oak tree. Great and small deeds lie equally within the scope of the graces of the gods.

160 *Like one i' the stocks*] Like one in some ignominious position.

# CORIOLANUS

ACT V

Down, ladies; let us shame him with our knees.  
 To his surname Coriolanus 'longs more pride 170  
 Than pity to our prayers. Down: an end;  
 This is the last: so we will home to Rome,  
 And die among our neighbours. Nay, behold's:  
 This boy, that cannot tell what he would have,  
 But kneels and holds up hands for fellowship,  
 Does reason our petition with more strength  
 Than thou hast to deny't. Come, let us go:  
 This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;  
 His wife is in Corioli, and his child  
 Like him by chance. Yet give us our dispatch: 180  
 I am hush'd until our city be a-fire,  
 And then I'll speak a little.

COR. [*After holding her by the hand, silent*] O mother,  
 mother!

What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,  
 The gods look down, and this unnatural scene  
 They laugh at. O my mother, mother! O!  
 You have won a happy victory to Rome;  
 But, for your son, believe it, O, believe it,  
 Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,  
 If not most mortal to him. But let it come.  
 Aufidius, though I cannot make true wars, 190  
 I'll frame convenient peace. Now, good Aufidius,  
 Were you in my stead, would you have heard  
 A mother less? or granted less, Aufidius?

176-177 *Does reason . . . to deny't*] There is more force of reason in the boy's support of our petition than in your resolve to refuse it.

179-180 *his child Like him by chance*] his child resembles him by accident, is not really his son.

AUF. I was moved withal.

COR. I dare be sworn you were:

And, sir, it is no little thing to make

Mine eyes to sweat compassion. But, good sir,

What peace you'll make, advise me: for my part,

I'll not to Rome, I'll back with you; and pray you,

Stand to me in this cause, O mother! wife!

AUF. [*Aside*] I am glad thou hast set thy mercy and  
thy honour

200

At difference in thee: out of that I'll work

Myself a former fortune. [*The Ladies make signs to Coriolanus.*]

COR. [*To Volumnia, Virgilia, &c.*] Ay, by and by:—

But we will drink together; and you shall bear

A better witness back than words, which we

On like conditions will have counter-seal'd.

Come, enter with us. Ladies, you deserve

To have a temple built you: all the swords

In Italy, and her confederate arms.

Could not have made this peace.

[*Exeunt.*]

199 *Stand to me in this cause*] Support me in this business.

201-202 *I'll work . . . fortune*] I will take advantage of this course of events to regain my former position of independence. Cf V, v, 49, *infra*.

203 *we will drink together*] Apparently Coriolanus proposes to drink the healths of Aufidius and the Volscian leaders.

206-207 *Ladies . . . built you*] According to Plutarch, a temple to Fortune was built by order of the Senate in honour of these ladies' intercession. The edifice was built at their own expense; for they refused the offer of the Senate to bear the cost.



## SCENE IV — ROME

## A PUBLIC PLACE

*Enter MENENIUS and SICINIUS*

MEN. See your yond coign o' the Capitol, yond corner-stone?

SIC. Why, what of that?

MEN. If it be possible for you to displace it with your little finger, there is some hope the ladies of Rome, especially his mother, may prevail with him. But I say there is no hope in't: our throats are sentenced, and stay upon execution.

SIC. Is 't possible that so short a time can alter the condition of a man?

MEN. There is differency between a grub and a butterfly; yet your butterfly was a grub. This Marcius is grown from man to dragon: he has wings; he's more than a creeping thing.

SIC. He loved his mother dearly.

MEN. So did he me: and he no more remembers his mother now than an eight-year-old horse. The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes: when he walks, he moves like an engine, and the ground shrinks before his treading: he is able to pierce a corselet with his eye; <sup>20</sup> he talks like a knell, and his hum is a battery. He sits in

8 *stay upon execution*] only wait for execution.

10 *condition*] disposition.

11 *differency*] Thus the First Folio. The later Folios have the ordinary form *difference*.

17 *an eight-year-old horse*] *sc.* remembers his dam.

19 *an engine*] *sc.* of war, a battering-ram.

his state, as a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done, is finished with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in.

SIC. Yes, mercy, if you report him truly.

MEN. I paint him in the character. Mark what mercy his mother shall bring from him: there is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger; that shall our poor city find: and all this is long of you.

SIC. The gods be good unto us! 30

MEN. No, in such a case the gods will not be good unto us. When we banished him, we respected not them; and, he returning to break our necks, they respect not us.

*Enter a Messenger*

MESS. Sir, if you'd save your life, fly to your house: The plebeians have got your fellow-tribune, And hale him up and down, all swearing, if The Roman ladies bring not comfort home, They'll give him death by inches.

*Enter another Messenger*

SIC. What's the news?

SEC. MESS. Good news, good news; the ladies have prevail'd,

22 *state*] chair of state. Cf. V, i, 63, *supra*: "he does sit in gold."

*as a thing made for Alexander*] like a thing intended to represent Alexander the Great, like a statue of Alexander.

26 *in the character*] in the true character.

29 *long of you*] along of you, owing to you.

The Volscians are dislodged, and Marcius gone: 40  
 A merrier day did never yet greet Rome,  
 No, not the expulsion of the Tarquins.

SIC. Friend,

Art thou certain, this is true? is it most certain?

SEC. MESS. As certain as I know the sun is fire:  
 Where have you lurk'd, that you make doubt of it?  
 Ne'er through an arch so hurried the blown tide,  
 As the recomforted through the gates. Why, hark you!

[*Trumpets; hautboys; drums beat; all together.*]

The trumpets, sackbuts, psalteries and fifes,  
 Tabors and cymbals and the shouting Romans,

Make the sun dance. Hark you! [*A shout within.*]

MEN. This is good news: 50

I will go meet the ladies. This Volumnia  
 Is worth of consuls, senators, patricians,  
 A city full; of tribunes, such as you,  
 A sea and land full. You have pray'd well to-day:  
 This morning for ten thousand of your throats  
 I'd not have given a doit. Hark, how they joy!

[*Music still, with shouts.*]

SIC. First, the gods bless you for your tidings; next,  
 Accept my thankfulness.

46-47 *Ne'er through . . . the gates*] Doubtless a reference to the noisy rush of water through the arches of London bridge. Cf. *Lucrece*, 1667-1668: "As through an arch the violent roaring tide Outruns the eye that doth behold his haste."

50 *Make the sun dance*] The sun was believed to dance on Easter day. Cf. Suckling's *Ballad on a Wedding*, verse 8: "But oh! she dances such a way, No sun upon an Easter day Is half so fine a sight."

## SCENE VI

## CORIOLANUS

SEC. MESS. Sir, we have all  
Great cause to give great thanks.

SIC. They are near the city?

SEC. MESS. Almost at point to enter.

SIC. We will meet them, <sup>60</sup>  
And help the joy. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE V — THE SAME

## A STREET NEAR THE GATE

*Enter two Senators with VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, VALERIA, &c. passing over the stage, followed by Patricians and others*

FIRST SEN. Behold our patroness, the life of Rome!  
Call all your tribes together, praise the gods,  
And make triumphant fires; strew flowers before them:  
Unshout the noise that banish'd Marcius,  
Repeal him with the welcome of his mother;  
Cry "Welcome, ladies, welcome!"

ALL. Welcome, ladies,  
Welcome! [A flourish with drums and trumpets. Exeunt.]

## SCENE VI — CORIOLI

## A PUBLIC PLACE

*Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS, with Attendants*

AUF. Go tell the lords o' the city I am here:  
Deliver them this paper: having read it,

---

<sup>60</sup> at point to enter] on the point of entering.

SCENE V] Dyce first noted the beginning of a new short scene here.

Bid them repair to the market-place, where I,  
 Even in theirs and in the commons' ears,  
 Will vouch the truth of it. Him I accuse  
 The city ports by this hath enter'd, and  
 Intends to appear before the people, hoping  
 To purge himself with words: dispatch.

[*Exeunt Attendants.*]

*Enter three or four Conspirators of AUFIDIUS' faction*

Most welcome!

FIRST CON. How is it with our general?

AUF. Even so 10

As with a man by his own alms empoison'd,  
 And with his charity slain.

SEC. CON. Most noble sir,  
 If you do hold the same intent wherein  
 You wish'd us parties, we 'll deliver you  
 Of your great danger.

AUF. Sir, I cannot tell:  
 We must proceed as we do find the people.

THIRD CON. The people will remain uncertain whilst  
 'Twixt you there's difference; but the fall of either  
 Makes the survivor heir of all.

AUF. I know it,  
 And my pretext to strike at him admits 20  
 A good construction. I raised him, and I pawn'd  
 Mine honour for his truth: who being so heighten'd,

6 *ports*] gates; so I, vii, 1, *supra*.

13-14 *If you do hold . . . parties*] If you hold to the purpose (of killing  
 Coriolanus) in which you desired our co-operation.

21 *A good construction*] A plausible explanation.

He water'd his new plants with dews of flattery,  
Seducing so my friends; and, to this end,  
He bow'd his nature, never known before  
But to be rough, unswayable and free.

THIRD CON. Sir, his stoutness  
When he did stand for consul, which he lost  
By lack of stooping, —

AUF. That I would have spoke of:  
Being banish'd for 't, he came unto my hearth;  
Presented to my knife his throat: I took him,  
Made him joint-servant with me, gave him way  
In all his own desires, nay, let him choose  
Out of my files, his projects to accomplish,  
My best and freshest men, served his designments  
In mine own person, help to reap the fame  
Which he did end all his; and took some pride  
To do myself this wrong: till at the last

50

23 *He water'd . . . flattery*] He cherished his new allies by plentifully  
flattering them. Mr. Craig quotes North's translation of Plutarch's  
Life of Cato (*ed.* 1595, p. 373): "he could make men *water their*  
*plants* (i. e., behave submissively) that heard him."

25 *bow'd*] bent, adapted.

26 *free*] outspoken.

34 *my files*] my musters.

35-36 *served his designments . . . person*] helped his plans with my personal service.

36 *holp*] the archaic form of "helped." Cf. V, iii, 63, *supra*.

37 *Which he did end all his*] The whole of which he garnered or stored for himself. "End" is still common in dialect as a verb meaning "to get in," or "store," crops. Shakespeare also uses in the same sense the verb "in," of which "end" is really only a dialectic variation. Cf. *All's Well*, I, iii, 43: "to *in* the crop."

I seem'd his follower, not partner, and  
He waged me with his countenance, as if  
I had been mercenary. 40

FIRST CON. So he did, my lord:  
The army marvell'd at it, and in the last,  
When he had carried Rome and that we look'd  
For no less spoil than glory —

AUF. There was it:  
For which my sinews shall be stretch'd upon him.  
At a few drops of women's rheum, which are  
As cheap as lies, he sold the blood and labour  
Of our great action: therefore shall he die,  
And I'll renew me in his fall. But hark!

[*Drums and trumpets sound, with great shouts of the people.*]

FIRST CON. Your native town you enter'd like a post, 50  
And had no welcomes home; but he returns,  
Splitting the air with noise.

SEC. CON. And patient fools,  
Whose children he hath slain, their base throats tear  
With giving him glory.

THIRD CON. Therefore, at your vantage,  
Ere he express himself, or move the people  
With what he would say, let him feel your sword,

40-41 *He waged me . . . mercenary*] He paid me (like a hireling) with his patronising favour.

43 *carried*] conquered, taken. Cf. IV, vii, 27, *supra*: "he'll carry Rome."

45 *For which . . . upon him*] For which I will attack him to the full extent of my strength.

47 *As cheap as lies*] Cf. *Hamlet*, III, ii, 348: "it is easy as lying."

50 *a post*] a postboy, a messenger.

54 *at your vantage*] at an opportunity favourable to you.

Which we will second. When he lies along,  
After your way his tale pronounced shall bury  
His reasons with his body.

AUF. Say no more:  
Here come the lords.

60

*Enter the Lords of the city*

ALL THE LORDS. You are most welcome home.

AUF. I have not deserved it.  
But, worthy lords, have you with heed perused  
What I have written to you?

LORDS. We have.

FIRST LORD. And grieve to hear 't.  
What faults he made before the last, I think  
Might have found easy fines: but there to end  
Where he was to begin, and give away  
The benefit of our levies, answering us  
With our own charge, making a treaty where  
There was a yielding, — this admits no excuse.

AUF. He approaches: you shall hear him.

70

*Enter CORIOLANUS, marching with drum and colours; the commoners being with him*

COR. Hail, lords! I am return'd your soldier;  
No more infected with my country's love

58 *After your way his tale pronounced*] The tale that may be told of him narrated in your own words. The ironical expression is equivalent to "your statement of his case" or "the account you give of him."

65 *easy fines*] easy condonation.

67-68 *answering . . . charge*] making us pay our own expenses for the war, giving us no return for our own money.



Than when I parted hence, but still subsisting  
Under your great command. You are to know,  
That prosperously I have attempted, and  
With bloody passage led your wars even to  
The gates of Rome. Our spoils we have brought  
home

Do more than counterpoise a full third part  
The charges of the action. We have made peace,  
With no less honour to the Antiates 80  
Than shame to the Romans: and we here deliver,  
Subscribed by the consuls and patricians,  
Together with the seal o' the senate, what  
We have compounded on.

AUF. Read it not, noble lords;  
But tell the traitor, in the highest degree  
He hath abused your powers.

COR. Traitor! how now!

AUF. Ay, traitor, Marcius!

COR. Marcius!

AUF. Ay, Marcius, Caius Marcius: dost thou  
think

I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stol'n name  
Coriolanus, in Corioli? 90  
You lords and heads o' the state, perfidiously  
He has betray'd your business, and given up,  
For certain drops of salt, your city Rome,  
I say "your city," to his wife and mother;

73 *parted*] departed.

93 *drops of salt*] tears. Cf. *Lear*, IV, vi, 196: "man of salt" (*i. e.*, tears).

Breaking his oath and resolution, like  
 A twist of rotten silk; never admitting  
 Counsel o' the war; but at his nurse's tears  
 He whined and roar'd away your victory;  
 That pages blush'd at him, and men of heart  
 Look'd wondering each at other.

COR. Hear'st thou, Mars? 100

AUF. Name not the god, thou boy of tears!

COR. Ha!

AUF. No more.

COR. Measureless liar, thou hast made my heart  
 Too great for what contains it. "Boy!" O slave!  
 Pardon me, lords, 't is the first time that ever  
 I was forced to scold. Your judgements, my grave  
 lords,

Must give this cur the lie: and his own notion —  
 Who wears my stripes impress'd upon him; that  
 Must bear my beating to his grave — shall join  
 To thrust the lie unto him.

110

FIRST LORD. Peace, both, and hear me speak.

COR. Cut me to pieces, Volsces; men and lads,  
 Stain all your edges on me. "Boy!" false hound!  
 If you have writ your annals true, 't is there,  
 That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I

96 *twist*] skein.

100 *other*] Rowe's correction of the Folio reading *others*.

101 *boy of tears*] cry-baby, blubbering boy. "Boy" is a term of contempt. Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, IV, i, 1: "He calls me *boy*."

107 *notion*] sense, understanding.

113 *your edges*] your sword-blades.

Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli;  
Alone I did it. "Boy!"

AUF. Why, noble lords,  
Will you be put in mind of his blind fortune,  
Which was your shame, by this unholy braggart,  
'Fore your own eyes and ears?

ALL CONSP. Let him die for 't. 120

ALL THE PEOPLE. "Tear him to pieces." "Do it  
presently." "He killed my son." "My daughter."  
"He killed my cousin Marcus." "He killed my father."

SEC. LORD. Peace, ho! no outrage: peace!  
The man is noble, and his fame folds-in  
This orb o' the earth. His last offences to us  
Shall have judicious hearing. Stand, Aufidius,  
And trouble not the peace.

COR. O that I had him,  
With six Aufidiuses, or more, his tribe,  
To use my lawful sword!

AUF. Insolent villain! 130

ALL CONSP. Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!

[*The Conspirators draw, and kill Coriolanus:  
Aufidius stands on his body.*]

LORDS. Hold, hold, hold, hold!

AUF. My noble masters, hear me speak.

FIRST LORD. O Tullus, —

SEC. LORD. Thou hast done a deed whereat valour  
will weep.

116 *Flutter'd*] Thus the Third and Fourth Folios. The First and Second  
Folios weakly read *Flatter'd*.

125-126 *folds-in . . . earth*] embraces, overspreads the whole world.

127 *judicious hearing*] judicial inquiry or trial.

THIRD LORD. Tread not upon him. Masters all, be  
quiet;

Put up your swords.

AUF. My lords, when you shall know — as in this  
rage

Provoked by him, you cannot — the great danger  
Which this man's life did owe you, you'll rejoice  
That he is thus cut off. Please it your honours  
To call me to your senate, I'll deliver  
Myself your loyal servant, or endure  
Your heaviest censure.

140

FIRST LORD. Bear from hence his body;  
And mourn you for him: let him be regarded  
As the most noble corse that ever herald  
Did follow to his urn.

SEC. LORD. His own impatience  
Takes from Aufidius a great part of blame.  
Let's make the best of it.

AUF. My rage is gone,  
And I am struck with sorrow. Take him up:  
Help, three o' the chiefest soldiers; I'll be one.  
Beat thou the drum, that it speak mournfully:  
Trail your steel pikes. Though in this city he

150

138 *did owe you*] made you liable to, exposed you to.

144-145 *As the noble corse . . . to his urn*] Shakespeare associates with  
Roman funeral customs the prominent share taken in the funeral cere-  
monies of great persons in his own day by the professional herald who  
pronounced the formal title of the deceased when the coffin was laid in  
the grave.

145 *His own impatience*] Coriolanus' irascibility.

151 *Trail your steel pikes*] Soldiers at funerals dragged their pikes along

## CORIOLANUS

ACT V

Hath widow'd and unchilded many a one,  
Which to this hour bewail the injury,  
Yet he shall have a noble memory.

Assist.

[*Exeunt, bearing the body of Coriolanus.\**  
*A dead march sounded.*]

the ground when attending the funeral of a comrade as nowadays  
they reverse their muskets.

154 *a noble memory*] a noble memorial. Cf. IV, iv, 71, and V, i, 17, *supra*.

# SONNETS





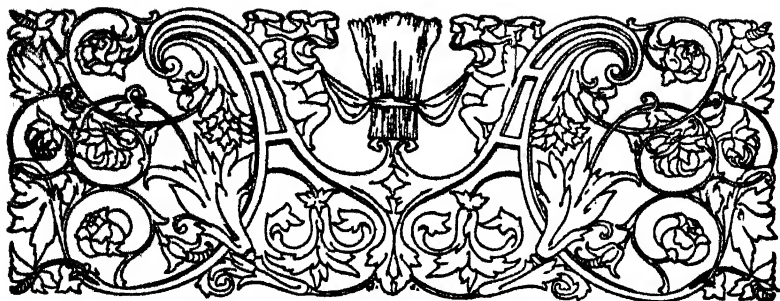




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## INTRODUCTION



**A**N author always composes his autobiography, more or less fully, according to the nature and extent of his writings; because whatsoever a man writes is autobiographic. Thus the sincerity of an author's personal utterance undergoes an immediate and infallible test: it is confronted with the witness of his works. Confessions, reminiscences, biographies and autobiographies of authors must all answer the exhaustive cross-examination of every paragraph or character they have written or created. The man is in his books, and if the biographic or autobiographic matter is not measurably a synoptical index to them, the trial of truth between the two puts the one or the other out of court. Where shall we look for a man's life if not in his works? Napoleon will be found in his campaigns, battles, code;

## THE SONNETS

Shakespeare, in his plays and poems. It is extraordinary how Englishmen, cultured and uncultured, have clung to the idea, to the hope that Shakespeare is not to be found in his works. Probably they have hugged this illusion to their hearts because they beheld in moments of honesty behind the veil of the dramas and sonnets something—very unlike themselves. Shakespeare—it was Emerson who gave the saying currency—is the most truly known of all English men of letters; he and his work are one indissolubly. The true Samuel Johnson we shall never know. The creative artist, Boswell, has made a palimpsest of the lexicographer's works, writing, as it were, the illuminated life of a saint on the rough hide of Behemoth. The true Carlyle it may be difficult to recover. Froude has scored across the works of the most chivalrous figure among English prosemen, Don Quixote, sane and a prophet, the unworthy story of a soured Sancho Panza. But it is impossible not to know Shakespeare as far as man can know him. No biography by some dazzled or envious contemporary exists to mislead us. The plays, the poems, the sonnets—the style is here the man without alloy; and in the sonnets we come nearest to him. These are the personal utterances of him who made Hamlet and Parolles, and the multitude between; of the man who found the world an empty nut, and in it placed a kernel which human intelligence has not yet devoured and digested.

The æsthetic value of Shakespeare's sonnets is commensurate with their autobiographic truth. This does not imply any sullen reflection on Shakespeare's char-

## INTRODUCTION

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acter. An unworthy spirit of criticism has long been puzzling over the matter and asserting more loudly than its warrant that there is a hateful revelation in the sonnets. Parolles seems to say to Hamlet, "It is I who am Shakespeare, not you. As I exclaimed three hundred years ago,

'Who knows himself a braggart  
Let him fear this; for it will come to pass  
That every braggart shall be found an ass.'

I have come into my own, my lord. Hitherto Shakespearean has meant simply Hamletian. The good-natured world—for the actual world is at the best and in the gross exceedingly thoughtless and agreeable—I say, my lord, the good-natured world, highly flattered at its supposed reflection, dressed its mind in the magic mirror of Hamlet, and fancied itself Shakespearean. But Hamlet and Prospero are only the vanity of Shakespeare; I, Parolles, am the true Shakespeare; and I can prove it. I am the true Shakespeare; because, with the exception of the nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet,' who is liker Shakespeare than any other of his creations saving myself, I am the only really live character in all his plays. Falstaff, Richard, Juliet, Iago, Nym, yourself, my lord Hamlet, are merely fairies, good, bad, or indifferent. I do not mean that Shakespeare intended me for himself: I am the sub-consciousness, the inmost fibre of the man—the Judas of very self, which every artist, unbeknown, creates for his own betrayal. This men begin to recognize; and the moment they are fully aware of the self-

## THE SONNETS

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deception of their Hamleto-Shakespeareanism, the empire of Shakespeare is destroyed, and the world becomes once more an empty nut; except that I remain, the self-pilloried monster, the Judas-Shakespeare who cozened the foolish world for three hundred years. Oh! there is no question of it! That I am Shakespeare is made apparent to any awakened intelligence by the fact that what was subconscious as Parolles becomes conscious as a palliated, a self-excused characteristic of the loquacious, casual Hamlet—the mirror, the false, the magic mirror which Shakespeare held up to nature. But my main proof, my impregnable rock, is the book of sonnets: they are the evidence in chief for my identity with Shakespeare. In them I have written myself down infamous in the last degree; the hack and slave of Southampton and Pembroke; the go-between for courtiers and their mistresses: a fatuous fool; a debased sensualist, a . . . ” Here the look in Hamlet’s eyes would arrest the noisy ape; and Hamlet himself would probably reply: “Understand, Parolles, that Shakespeare was greater than either you or I; that you, by many degrees inferior to the average sensual man, are less alive than almost any other character Shakespeare portrayed, lacking as you do both conscience and imagination. Beside you Pistol is beautiful and Bardolf sweet. What have we to do with the faults of Shakespeare? Who is there at all that shall judge him? It is law all the world over that men must be judged by their peers. Where are those who may sit with Shakespeare? Dante, Goethe, Hugo, Ibsen are parochial beside him. Cæsar, Charlemagne, Cromwell,

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Napoleon are of a different order. I myself am likest Shakespeare of all the beings he made. Those tables on which I scribbled against the wall of Elsinore, that one may smile and smile and be a villain, are perhaps the very tables on which Shakespeare wrote his sonnets. So extraordinary a being would keep an extraordinary commonplace book. His sonnets are memoranda written principally for himself, and although some of the matter is re-produced in the plays, the meaning of much of it can only be guessed at. Why may not the persons of the sonnets be the symbols of a poetic shorthand of which the key perished with Shakespeare himself? Never in any case read into the sonnets a loathsome meaning. Neither for purposes of botanical study, nor for the satisfaction of the senses of sight or smell, is it helpful to daub a flower with the manure out of which it grew."

Why did Shakespeare choose this form for a personal utterance? It was hardly a choice. The sonnet, a poetic artifice of high quality, which obtained a lasting vogue from its noble employment by Petrarch, degenerated during the sixteenth century into a species of *vers de société* and ravaged the literature of Europe like a plague. It was not a mere malady of form. There was no sonnet peculiar to each nation. The poets of Italy, France, and England all wrote the same European sonnet, taking, it might almost be said, a greater formal than material license. Character, intellect, genius were powerless against the disease. Michael Angelo, the greatest and most various force in art, and William



## THE SONNETS

Shakespeare, the one miraculous, undefinable intelligence, of the modern world, could not escape it. In the sinewy intellect, the concentrated personality, the engrained health and deep religious mood of Michael Angelo this malady of the sonnet was transmuted at once into an expression of spiritual passion; whereas in the limitless soul of Shakespeare it had ample scope to be itself as well as the personal utterance of the master-poet. Risking the contagion in an experimental essay or two, Shakespeare found himself with a fever in the brain fated to run its intermittent course; for this passing inoculation of the fancy, as it doubtless seemed to him at first, entered into the very marrow of his existence and issued in poetry that sighs in the ear of Time forever the anguish of the soul of Shakespeare, like the tidal sighing of the ocean stretched on "the rack of this tough world."

Platonic friendship, the adulation of a patron, a sexual passion and the pleasures and pains, the praise and blame of love, with illustrations from the shows of Nature, the seasons of the year, and a toyshop of conceits were the warp and woof of the fashionable, seductive sonnet of Europe. But as Shakespeare was Shakespeare, loved his patron and suffered an actual passion for his mistress, all these common characteristics became in his hands uncommon and beautiful. From the very first sonnet Shakespeare's profound affection looks out wistfully, with a mingled air of intense admiration and intense pathos:—

"Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,  
And only herald to the gaudy spring."

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The cry is muffled in the flowing convention of these lines; but it is Adam's cry to Orlando:—

“ Master, go on, and I will follow thee  
To the last gasp with truth and loyalty.”

It is the voice of Viola:—

“ And I most jocund, apt and willingly  
To do you rest a thousand deaths would die; ”

the voice of Antonio, of Imogen, of Kent, of Flavius, of Brutus's Portia, of all self-sacrifice.

Lesser men, Swift or Frederick the Great, could put up with makeshifts or forego the friendship of men altogether; but not Cæsar, not Shakespeare. Among those near Shakespeare in degree and vocation, good comrades as they and he doubtless were, not one of them could be the companion of his soul. Rank, wealth, beauty, youth; the pathos of distance which extorted that resolute measured complaint—

“ Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,  
And almost thence my nature is subdued  
To what it works in like the dyer's hand — ”

drew him also heart and mind to the magnificent and genial aristocrat whose good-will gave him the command of his theatre. A nature so great and perfect in its humanity as Shakespeare's must surrender itself entirely in friendship as in love. The faults, the offences of his friend are so many knots and rivets of his affection. He searches in himself for the reasons of his friend's indiffer-

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ence ; and when he finds that there are others who share an equal intimacy and are even sometimes preferred, it is upon himself his jealousy turns —

“ I grant, sweet love, thy lovely argument  
Deserves the travail of a worthier pen ; ”

but although in his despondent mood he desires “ this man’s art and that man’s scope,” he knows well there is no “ worthier pen,” and must say so, turning it off with a conceit —

“ But when your countenance filled up his line,  
Then lacked I matter ; that enfeebled mine.”

Shakespeare’s friendship for his patron was as infinite as his soul, and this infinite affection finds in the eighty-eighth sonnet expression so terrible that our souls shudder at it : —

“ When thou shalt be disposed to set me light,  
And place my merit in the eye of scorn,  
Upon thy side against myself I’ll fight  
And prove thee virtuous, though thou art forsworn.  
With mine own weakness being best acquainted,  
Upon thy part I can set down a story  
Of faults concealed wherein I am attained,  
That thou in losing me shalt win much glory  
And I by this will be a gainer too ;  
For bending all my loving thoughts on thee,  
The injuries that to myself I do,  
Doing thee vantage, double-vantage me.  
Such is my love, to thee I so belong,  
That for thy right myself will bear all wrong.”

“ Out of his weakness and his melancholy ” this cry is wrung. It is not only his capricious friend, it is man-

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kind Shakespeare addresses. He was, utterly alone ; the fate of supreme genius ; to him intolerable, being most human, most humane. How utterly alone, the second series of sonnets shows.

Shakespeare had no personal experience of a spiritual regard, like that of Michael Angelo for Vittoria Colonna : the "public means which public manners breeds" made that perhaps impossible. The dark lady of the sonnets, while her power lasted, held him bound in sensual chains. As to his friend, so to his mistress, it was a complete surrender : —

"Can'st thou, O cruel ! say I love thee not,  
When I against myself with thee partake ?"

No question, there was degradation and bitter shame in Shakespeare's passion for this

"Whitely wanton with a velvet brow  
And two pitch balls stuck in her face for eyes."

He strove to transcend his senses ; to see her other than she was, with the strangest, ineffectual, half-humorous, half-ludicrous imagery : —

"And truly not the morning sun of heaven  
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,  
Not that full star that ushers in the even  
Doth half that glory to the sober west  
As those two mourning eyes become thy face."

His soul was in arms against her from the beginning, and the re-action after her caresses (Sonnet CXXIX.) is

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the breathless recovery of a half-throttled creature escaped from a python. But escape was not easy; even when she had become the mistress of his friend he was powerless in the strong toil of her fascination. Not until his soul seemed entirely quelled (Sonnet CLI.) could the passion end; then indeed it went out, like a smoky lamp that falls with a crash:—

“For I have sworn thee fair; more perjured I  
To swear against the truth so foul a lie.”

That is the concluding couplet of the hundred and fifty-second sonnet: the two remaining sonnets do not belong to the series. The passion ends; executed; cut off; forgotten. Not so, the friendship: Shakespeare cherishes the memory of that; and the farewell sonnet (CXXVI.) is a promise of undying affection.

It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion, even if it were desirable to do so, that the sonnets of Shakespeare, often careless in expression, and now and again in a half-earnest mood as of one writing to exercise a gift or out of sheer *ennui*, contain a record essentially honest and sometimes terribly sincere of two interwoven experiences which touched him profoundly. They are part of the schooling of Shakespeare; the seed-plot of Hamlet and Horatio, Brutus and Cassius, of Antony and Cleopatra, of Edmund, Edgar, Goneril, Regan. We need not fit names either to the friend or to the mistress: the friend is man; the mistress, woman. The friendship and the love of Shakespeare, the supreme genius, could not fail

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to yield the saddest story: there was no companion for him among men; no mate among women.

Throughout the sonnets Shakespeare, as was his wont, is much more interested in the matter than the manner. It is quite clear also that in following the fashion he adopted a form which hampered the movement of his mind, and crippled his imagination. The feebleness of the tag which concludes, is in sad contrast with the splendid energy which opens, almost every sonnet. But even where the sonnets are sequential it is impossible to read them pleasantly without this rudimentary appendix: the resolution of the underlying dissonance in the alternate rhymes by the consonant chord of the couplet will be found upon trial more agreeable than the supersession of the emptiest tag. The æsthetic loom of the sonnets is a civil war between the poet—that is, the whole man, Shakespeare—and the brain of Shakespeare; a strife to be found in all his writings and in all poetry. The brain is only a register and sifter—at the highest an alembic; but its perpetual endeavour is towards an autocratic tyranny. A thinker is one who has permitted his brain to get the upper hand, exactly as the epicure gives the reins of power to his palate. In the poet, above all in the master-poet Shakespeare, the nerves, the heart, the liver, the germs of life that apprehend and think and feel—the whole assembly of his being is in perfect harmony while the poetical rapture lasts: no organ is master; a diapason extends throughout the entire scale: his whole body, his whole soul is rapt into the making of his poetry. Imagination, like love, gathers in its ecstasy

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the whole flower of being; but the mind is constantly escaping, interfering, controlling — a necessary provision against debauchery and insanity. Hence it is that poetry only *occurs*, and that even in the shortest poem there are lines which are not poetry. Hence also rhyme, always containing more of intellect than of sensibility, is merely a wanton adornment, or a coy veil, of rhythm — rhythm, which is poetry in its naked beauty. In his sonnets Shakespeare is tethered by the form and fettered by rhyme — of the latter he was never a remarkable exponent; yet if he had written nothing else than the sonnets he would have been at least one of the greatest of English poets; and his devout adorers might have imagined what variety of rhythm lay hidden in the measured cadence of these lines —

“That time of year thou may’st in me behold  
When yellow leaves or none or few do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold;”

or of these —

“How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame  
Which like a canker in the fragrant rose  
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name;”

although no other imagination than Shakespeare’s could have touched so tragic a pathos with the first image as Macbeth’s

“I have lived long enough: my way of life  
Is fallen into the seer, the yellow leaf;”

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or inshrined the second in such a miracle of utterance as  
Viola's

“ She never told her love ;  
But let concealment like a worm i' the bud  
Feed on her damask cheek.”

JOHN DAVIDSON.





## SONNETS<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Shakespeare's *Sonnets* Never before Imprinted" was first published in quarto in 1609, with the appendix of *A Lover's Complaint*. All the *Sonnets* save eight were reissued in a different order (and mingled indiscriminately with the poems of *The Passionate Pilgrim*) in "*Poems, written by Will. Shakespeare, Gent.*" in 1640. The omitted sonnets were those numbered here xviii, xix, xliii, lvi, lxxv, lxxvi, xcvi, cxxvi.

TO . THE . ONLIE . BEGETTER . OF .  
 THESE . INSVING . SONNETS .  
 M<sup>r</sup> W. H.<sup>1</sup> ALL . HAPPINESSE .  
 AND . THAT . ETERNITIE .  
 PROMISED .  
 BY .  
 OVR . EVER-LIVING . POET .  
 WISHETH .<sup>2</sup>  
 THE . WELL-WISHING .  
 ADVENTVRER . IN .  
 SETTING .  
 FORTH .<sup>3</sup>

T. T.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The onlie begetter* . . . M<sup>r</sup> W. H.] "Begetter" seems to mean here "procurer," *sc.* of the manuscripts which T[homas] T[horpe], the adventurous publisher of the *Sonnets*, and the signatory of this dedication, was here printing. "Beget" is constantly found in Elizabethan English in the sense of "procure" without any implication of "breed" or "generate." Cf. *Lucrece*, 1004-1005: "the thing . . . *Begets* him hate"; *Hamlet*, III, ii, 7: "acquire and *beget* a temperance"; Dekker's *Satromastix* (1602): "Some cousins-german at court shall *beget* you (*i. e.*, procure for you) the reversion of the master of the King's revels" (Hawkins' "Origin of the English Drama," iii, 156.) M<sup>r</sup> W. H., "the begetter," doubtless a trade friend of the publisher, stood to the volume in much the same relation as John Bodenham, a well-known contemporary anthologist, stood to the collection of miscellaneous poetic extracts, which the stationer Hugh Astley published under the title of "Belvedere, or Garden of the Muses," in 1600. A preliminary dedicatory sonnet to Bodenham addresses him as "first *causer* and *collectour* of these floures," and in the colophon the publisher calls Bodenham the "gentleman who was the *cause* of this collection." In like sense M<sup>r</sup> W. H., the publisher's trade friend, was the "causer" and the "cause" of Thorpe's volume. See Oxford facsimile of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, 1609 (1905, Preface, p. 37).

<sup>2</sup> *all happiness* . . . *wisheth*] This is a modification of a very common dedicatory formula of the day in which the words "all happiness" and "eternity" were invariably governed by the same inflection "wisheth" of the verb "wish." The poets habitually promised eternity to their patrons, and the dedicatory here "wisheth" his friend, M<sup>r</sup> W. H., "eternitie" no less grudgingly than Shakespeare "our everliving poet" offered his own friend (whose identity is not revealed) the promise of eternity in the sonnets which follow.

<sup>3</sup> *The well-wishing* . . . *forth*] The benevolent speculator in this venture. "Adventurer in setting forth" is technical mercantile language which is often found in dedications penned by Elizabethan publishers.

<sup>4</sup> T. T.] Thomas Thorpe, a publisher in a small way of business, who owned the copyright in the poems contained in the *Sonnets*, Quarto of 1609. He is not otherwise associated with the ownership or publication of Shakespeare's writing. See Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, Appendix V.



## SONNETS



<sup>I</sup>  
FROM FAIREST  
creatures we desire increase,  
That thereby beauty's rose  
might never die,  
But as the riper should by time  
decease,  
His tender heir might bear his  
memory:  
But thou, contracted to thine  
own bright eyes,  
Feed'st thy light's flame with  
self-substantial fuel,  
Making a famine where abund-  
ance lies,

Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.  
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament

1, 1-4 *From fairest creatures . . . his memory*] The argument which is here initiated and is continued in the first seventeen sonnets that a human being of exceptional beauty owes it to the world to procreate children for the benefit of future ages is a common theme of Renaissance poetry, and is repeatedly found in the addresses of poets to young

## SONNETS

10

And only herald to the gaudy spring,  
 Within thine own bud buriest thy content  
 And, tender churl, makest waste in niggarding.  
     Pity the world, or else this glutton be,  
     To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

### II

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow  
 And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,

- patrons. Erasmus seems to have set the fashion of the argument in his colloquy, *Proci et Puellae* (Of a suitor and a maiden) The plea is twice versified elaborately in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (bk iii), firstly, in the talk between Cecropia and Philoclea and, secondly, in the addresses of the old dependant Geron to his master Prince Hystor. In Guarini's *Pastor Fido* (1585) the old dependant Linco similarly addresses himself to his master, the hero Silvio (Act I). Shakespeare dealt with the theme in *Venus and Adonis* thrice (129-132, 162-174, 751-768), as well as in *Rom. and Jul.*, I, i, 213-218. See also *Mids N Dr.*, I, i, 76-78; *All 's Well*, I, i, 117 *seq* ; and *Tw. Night*, I, v, 225-227
- 5 *contracted*] betrothed; a common usage. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, IV, ii, 16: "contracted bachelors." So *infra*, lvi, 10.
- 6 *Feed'st . . . self-substantial fuel*] Feedest the brilliance of thy eyes with fuel of thine own substance, *i. e.*, sight of thyself.
- 10 *only herald . . . spring*] first blossom promising the bright coloured spring.
- 11 *thy content*] what is contained in thee, thy individuality.
- 12 *makest waste in niggarding*] Cf. *Rom. and Jul*, I, i, 215-216: "BEN. Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste? ROM. She hath, and in that *sparing makes huge waste.*"
- 13-14 *this glutton be . . . and thee*] play the part of the glutton (who absorbs more than is necessary for his sustenance) by wilfully consuming the progeny which you owe the world, — in virtue of the two facts that the grave will in due time claim thee, and that thy personal beauty, which deserves to live, must perish if thou diest childless.
- 11, 2 *dig deep trenches . . . field*] Cf. *Tit. Andr.*, V, ii, 23: "Witness these *trenches* made by grief and care."

## SONNETS

Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,  
 Will be a tatter'd weed, of small worth held :  
 Then being ask'd where all thy beauty lies,  
 Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,  
 To say, within thine own deep-sunken eyes,  
 Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise.  
 How much more praise deserved thy beauty's use,  
 If thou couldst answer "This fair child of mine" 10  
 Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,"  
 Proving his beauty by succession thine !  
     This were to be new made when thou art old,  
     And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

### III

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest  
 Now is the time that face should form another;  
 Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,  
 Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother.  
 For where is she so fair whose unear'd womb  
 Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry ?

---

4 *a tatter'd weed*] a ragged garment. The 1609 Quarto reads *totter'd* for *tatter'd*; so again xxvi, 11, *infra*.

8 *thriftless*] profitless, useless.

11 *Shall sum . . . old excuse*] Shall give full account of me, and offer excuse for, or justify, my age. Cf. for the whole context Sidney's *Arcadia* (bk. iii, 1674 ed, p. 403): "Riches of children pass a prince's throne, Which touch the father's heart with secret joy, When without shame he saith 'These be mine own.'"

III, 5-6 *whose unear'd womb . . . husbandry*] Cf. *Meas. for Meas.*, I, iv, 43-44: "her plenteous *womb* Expresseth his full *tillth and husbandry*." "Unear'd" is unploughed or untilld.

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Or who is he so fond will be the tomb  
Of his self-love, to stop posterity?  
Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee  
Calls back the lovely April of her prime:  
So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,  
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time.

10

But if thou live, remember'd not to be,  
Die single, and thine image dies with thee.

### IV

Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend  
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?  
Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend,

7-8 *who is he so fond . . . to stop posterity*] Cf. Sidney's *Arcadia* (bk. iii, 1674 ed., p. 402): Geron to Histor, "Thy commonwealth may rightly grieved be Which must by this Immortal be preserved If thus thou murther thy posteritie. His very being he hath not deserved Who for a self-conceit will that forbear Whereby that being aye must be con-served." For like references elsewhere in Shakespeare see i, 1-4, *supra*, and note.

9-10 *Thou art thy mother's glass . . . prime*] Cf. *Lucrece*, 1758-1759: "Poor broken glass, I often did behold In thy sweet semblance my old age new born."

11 *through windows of thine age*] Cf. *Lover's Compl.*, 14: "Some beauty peep'd through lattice of sear'd age."

12 *thy golden time*] Cf. *Rich. III*, I, ii, 246: "the golded prime of this sweet prince."

iv, 1-4 *Unthrifty loveliness . . . are free*] Cf. Guarini's *Pastor Fido* (Act I, Sc. i): "a che ti diè natura Ne' più begli anni tuoi Fior di beltà sì delicato e vago, Se tu sei tanto a calpestarlo intento?" Fanshawe translates:

"Why did *frank Nature* upon thee bestow  
Blossoms of beauty in thy prime, so sweet  
And fair, for thee to trample under feet?"

## SONNETS

And being frank, she lends to those are free.  
 Then, beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse  
 The bounteous largess given thee to give?  
 Profitless usurer, why dost thou use  
 So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live?  
 For having traffic with thyself alone,  
 Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive.  
 Then how, when nature calls thee to be gone,  
 What acceptable audit canst thou leave?  
     Thy unused beauty must be tomb'd with thee,  
     Which, used, lives th' executor to be.

10

Those hours that with gentle work did frame  
 The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell  
 Will play the tyrants to the very same  
 And that unfair which fairly doth excel:  
 For never-resting time leads summer on  
 To hideous winter and confounds him there;  
 Sap check'd with frost and lusty leaves quite gone  
 Beauty o'ersnow'd and bareness every where.  
 Then, were not summer's distillation left,

---

4 *And being frank . . . are free*] And being generous, she lends to those who are liberal. Cf. *Meas. for Meas.*, I, i, 37-41: "Nature never *lends*," etc.  
 v, 2 *gaze*] subject or object of observation. Cf. *Macb.*, V, viii, 24: "to be the show and *gaze* o' the time."

4 *unfair*] unbeautify, make ugly. Cf. cxxvii, 6. "*Fairing* the foul."

9 *summer's distillation*] the extracted essence of the summer flowers. So line 13, *infra*; vi, 2-3, *infra*; and *Mids. N. Dr.*, I, i, 76: "earthlier happy is the rose *distill'd*." See also liv, 13-14, *infra*. The identical illustration from the rose figures in Erasmus' colloquy, "*Proci et Puellae*."



## SONNETS

A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass, 10  
 Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,  
 Nor it, nor no remembrance what it was:  
     But flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet,  
     Leese but their show; their substance still lives sweet.

### VI

Then let not winter's ragged hand deface  
 In thee thy summer, ere thou be distill'd:  
 Make sweet some vial; treasure thou some place  
 With beauty's treasure, ere it be self-kill'd.  
 That use is not forbidden usury,  
 Which happies those that pay the willing loan;  
 That 's for thyself to breed another thee,  
 Or ten times happier, be it ten for one;  
 Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,  
 If ten of thine ten times refigured thee: 10  
 Then what could death do, if thou shouldst depart,  
 Leaving thee living in posterity?  
     Be not self-will'd, for thou art much too fair  
     To be death's conquest and make worms thine heir.

---

10 *A liquid prisoner . . . glass*] Cf. Sidney's *Arcadia* (bk. iii, 1674 ed., p. 246): "Have you ever seen a pure rosewater kept in a crystal glass? How fine it looks, how sweet it smells, while that beautiful glass imprisons it. Break the prison, and let the water take his own course. Doth it not embrace dust, and lose of its former sweetness and fairness?"

14 *Leese*] Lose; an archaic word, occasionally found in Elizabethan English. See *Poems* by Thomas Watson (ed. Arber, pp. 44, 51).

vi, 1 *ragged*] rugged. Cf. *Rich. II*, V, v, 21: "ragged prison walls."

5 *That use*] That lending or investment of money at interest. So *Venus and Adonis*, 768: "gold that 's put to use more gold begets," and *Merch. of Ven.*, I, iii, 40: "The rate of *usance*."

## SONNETS

### VII

Lo, in the orient when the gracious light  
Lifts up his burning head, each under eye  
Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,  
Serving with looks his sacred majesty;  
And having climb'd the steep-up heavenly hill,  
Resembling strong youth in his middle age,  
Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,  
Attending on his golden pilgrimage;  
But when from highmost pitch, with weary car,  
Like feeble age, he reeleth from the day,  
The eyes, 'fore duteous, now converted are  
From his low tract, and look another way:  
So thou, thyself out-going in thy noon,  
Unlook'd on diest, unless thou get a son.

10

### VIII

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?  
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy.

vii, 1-4 *Lo, in the orient . . . majesty*] A graphic description of sun-worship repeated in many early plays. Cf. *L. L. L.*, IV, iii, 220, and note there.

5 *steep-up*] very steep. Cf. *Pass. Pilg.*, ix, 5: "Her stand she takes upon a *steep-up* hill."

10 *reeleth from the day*] Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, IV, iii, 3-4: "darkness like a drunkard reels *From forth day's path*."

11-12 *converted are From his low tract*] turn from his declining course. Cf. *Rich. II*, III, iii, 66-67 (of the sunset): "the *track* Of his bright *passage*."

viii A MS. copy in a seventeenth-century commonplace book in the

## SONNETS

Why lovest thou that which thou receivest not gladly,  
 Or else receivest with pleasure thine annoy?  
 If the true concord of well tuned sounds,  
 By unions married, do offend thine ear,  
 They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds  
 In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear.  
 Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,  
 Strikes each in each by mutual ordering; 10  
 Resembling sire and child and happy mother,  
 Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing:  
     Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one,  
     Sings this to thee: "Thou single wilt prove none."

### IX

Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye  
 That thou consumest thyself in single life?  
 Ah! if thou issueless shalt hap to die,  
 The world will wail thee, like a makeless wife;  
 The world will be thy widow, and still weep  
 That thou no form of thee hast left behind,

British Museum (MS. Add. 15226, f. 4 b) bears the heading: "In laudem musice et opprobrium contemptorij (*sic*) eiusdem."

1 *Music to hear*] Thou who art music to hear, thou whose voice is music.  
 Cf. cxxviii, 1, *infra*: "Thou my music."

14 *Sings this . . . prove none*] The 1609 Quarto has no stops here save at the end of the line. The Brit. Mus. MS. punctuates it thus: *Sings this to thee, Thou single, shall prove none*. Malone first gave the accepted punctuation. There is allusion here to the common proverbial jest, "One is no number." Cf. cxxxvi, 8, *infra*, and *Rom. and Jul.*, I, ii, 32-33, and note.

ix, 4 *makeless*] companionless; "make" is a common archaic word for "mate."

## SONNETS

When every private widow well may keep  
 By children's eyes her husband's shape in mind.  
 Look, what an unthrift in the world doth spend  
 Shifts but his place, for still the world enjoys it; 10  
 But beauty's waste hath in the world an end,  
 And kept unused, the user so destroys it.  
 No love toward others in that bosom sits  
 That on 'himself such murderous shame commits.

For shame! deny that thou bear'st love to any,  
 Who thyself art so unprovident.  
 Grant if thou wilt, thou art beloved of many,  
 But that thou none lovest is most evident;  
 For thou art so possess'd with murderous hate  
 That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to conspire,  
 Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate  
 Which to repair should be thy chief desire.  
 O, change thy thought, that I may change my mind!

9-10 *what an unthrift . . . his place*] that which a spendthrift squanders merely changes its place or ownership.

13 *No love . . . sits*] Chapman similarly addresses his patron the Duke of Lennox in his translation of Homer's *Iliad* (1598):

"None ever lived by self-love; others' good  
 Is th' object of our own. They living die  
 That bury in themselves their fortunes' brood."

x, 7 *that beauteous roof to ruinate*] to destroy that splendid household or family of thine. Cf. *Lucrece*, 944: "To ruinate proud buildings with thine hours." So *3 Hen. VI*, V, i, 83: "I will not ruinate my father's house," and *Two Gent.*, V, iv, 8-10. For different application of the image of a ruined building, see cxix, 11.

9 *my mind*] my opinion of thy character.

## SONNETS

Shall hate be fairer lodged than gentle love? 10  
 Be, as thy presence is, gracious and kind,  
 Or to thyself at least kind-hearted prove:  
     Make thee another self, for love of me,  
     That beauty still may live in thine or thee.

### XI

As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou grow'st  
 In one of thine, from that which thou departest;  
 And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st  
 Thou mayst call thine when thou from youth convertest.  
 Herein lives wisdom, beauty and increase;  
 Without this, folly, age and cold decay:  
 If all were minded so, the times should cease  
 And threescore year would make the world away.  
 Let those whom Nature hath not made for store,  
 Harsh, featureless and rude, barrenly perish: 10  
 Look, whom she best endow'd she gave the more;  
 Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty cherish:  
     She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby  
     Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy  
     die.

x1, 9 *for store*] for purpose of reproduction or replenishment. Cf. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, III, vi, 36 (of nature's reproductive processes): "the stocke [*sc.* of *Dame Nature*] . . . still remains in everlasting *store* [*i. e.*, in state of perpetual replenishment]" and xiv, 12, *infra*.

11 *she gave the more*] Thus the Quarto. Malone read *she gave thee more*, which simplifies the passage and is a justifiable change.

14 *that copy*] the carving on the original seal, whence impressions can be taken. Cf. *Tw. Night*, I, v, 227: "And leave the world no *copy*."

## SONNETS

### XII

When I do count the clock that tells the time,  
 • And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;  
 When I behold the violet past prime,  
 And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white;  
 When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,  
 Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,  
 And summer's green all girded up in sheaves,  
 Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard,  
 • Then of thy beauty do I question make,  
 That thou among the wastes of time must go, 10  
 Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake  
 And die as fast as they see others grow;  
     And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make  
     defence  
     Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

### XIII

O, that you were yourself! but, love, you are  
 No longer yours than you yourself here live:

---

XII, 3 *the violet past prime*] Cf. *Hamlet*, I, iii, 7: "*A violet in the youth of primy nature.*"

4 *And sable curls . . . white*] Cf. *Hamlet*, I, ii, 239-241: "his beard . . . *A sable silver'd*"

7-8 *summer's green . . . beard*] Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, II, i, 94-95: "the *green corn* Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard."

14 *Save breed*] Except children.

XIII, 1 *yourself*] independent of conditions of time. The use for the first time of "your," "you," etc., instead of the customary "thy," "thou," etc., is noticeable. The plural usage is only found repeated in thirty-four of the one hundred and fifty-four sonnets.

## SONNETS

Against this coming end you should prepare,  
 And your sweet semblance to some other give.  
 So should that beauty which you hold in lease  
 Find no determination; then you were  
 Yourself again, after yourself's decease,  
 When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear.  
 Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,  
 Which husbandry in honour might uphold  
 Against the stormy gusts of winter's day  
 And barren rage of death's eternal cold?  
 O, none but unthrifths: dear my love, you know  
 You had a father; let your son say so.

### XIV

Not from the stars do I my judgement pluck;  
 And yet methinks I have astronomy,  
 But not to tell of good or evil luck,  
 Of plagues, of dearths, or seasons' quality;  
 Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,  
 Pointing to each his thunder, rain and wind,  
 Or say with princes if it shall go well,  
 By oft predict that I in heaven find:

9-12 *Who lets . . . eternal cold*] Cf. Sidney's *Arcadia* (bk. iii, 1674 ed., p. 403): "Thy house by thee must live or else be gone, And then who shall the name of Histor nourish?"

10 *husbandry*] economy, prudence.

xiv, 2 *astronomy*] astrology. So Sidney's *Arcadia* (bk. iii, 1674 ed., p. 244): "thy heavenly face is my astronomy." Cf. *Astrophel*, xxvi, 1: "dusty wits dare scorn astrology."

6 *Pointing*] Appointing; so *Lucrece*, 879: "*point*'st the season."

8 *By oft predict*] By constant prediction or prophecy.

## SONNETS

But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,  
 And, constant stars, in them I read such art, 10  
 As truth and beauty shall together thrive,  
 If from thyself to store thou wouldst convert;  
 Or else of thee this I prognosticate:  
 Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date.

### xv

When I consider every thing that grows  
 Holds in perfection but a little moment,  
 That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows  
 Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;  
 When I perceive that men as plants increase,  
 Cheered and check'd even by the self-same sky,  
 Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,  
 And wear their brave state out of memory;  
 Then the conceit of this inconstant stay

9 *from thine eyes . . . I derive*] Cf. *L. L. L.*, IV, iii, 346: "*From women's eyes this doctrine I derive.*"

10 *constant stars . . . art*] Cf. Daniel's *Delia*, xxxiv, 5 (of Delia's eyes): "*Stars* sure they are, whose motions rule desires," etc. "*Art*" means astrological knowledge.

12 *If from thyself . . . convert*] If thou wouldst "convert thyself" [*i.e.*, turn] from conservation of thyself to replenishment of the future. See xi, 9, *supra*, and note.

14 *Thy end . . . beauty's doom and date*] Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 1019: "For he being dead, with him is beauty slain."

xv, 3 *this huge stage . . . shows*] an embryonic hint of Shakespeare's familiar comparison of the stage and the world in *As you like it*, II, vii, 139 *seq.* Cf. Spenser's *Amoretti*, liv: "Of this world's theatre in which we stay."

9 *the conceit . . . stay*] the notion or idea of this mutability of nature.



## SONNETS

Sets you most rich in youth before my sight, 10  
Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay,  
To change your day of youth to sullied night;  
And all in war with Time for love of you,  
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

### XVI

But wherefore do not you a mightier way  
Make war upon this bloody tyrant, Time?  
And fortify yourself in your decay  
With means more blessed than my barren rhyme?  
Now stand you on the top of happy hours,  
And many maiden gardens, yet unset,  
With virtuous wish would bear your living flowers  
Much liker than your painted counterfeit:  
So should the lines of life that life repair,

---

Cf. Ovid's *Metam.*, xv (Golding's transl., first published in 1567): "In all the world there is not that that standeth at a *stay*" (1612 ed., p. 185 b), and "Our bodies also cry To alter still from time to time and never stand at *stay*." Shakespeare gives numerous signs in this and other sonnets of familiarity with Golding's rendering of the philosophic disquisition on the mutability of nature which fills a large space in Ovid, *Metam.*, bk. xv; see xxxix, xlv, lv, lix, lx, lxiii, lxiv, cxliii.

12 *To change . . . sullied night*] Cf. *Rich.* III, IV, iv, 16: "Hath dimm'd your infant morn to aged night."

xvi, 3 *fortify yourself*] See lxiii, 9, and note.

6 *unset*] unsown, unplanted. Cf. *Pericles*, IV, vi, 84: "your herb-woman, she that *sets* seeds." So *Lover's Compl.*, 171 (of the seducer): "his plants in others' orchards grew."

8 *counterfeit*] picture.

9 *the lines of life*] the delineation of life in children.

## SONNETS

Which this, Time's pencil, or my pupil pen, 10  
 Neither in inward worth nor outward fair,  
 Can make you live yourself in eyes of men,  
     To give away yourself keeps yourself still;  
 And you must live, drawn by your own sweet  
     skill.

### XVII

Who will believe my verse in time to come,  
 If it were fill'd with your most high deserts?  
 Though yet, heaven knows, it is but as a tomb  
 Which hides your life and shows not half your  
     parts.  
 If I could write the beauty of your eyes  
 And in fresh numbers number all your graces,  
 The age to come would say "This poet lies;  
 Such heavenly touches ne'er touch'd earthly faces."  
 So should my papers, yellowed with their age,  
 Be scorn'd, like old men of less truth than tongue, 10

10 *this, Time's pencil*] this painting, the work of the artist's pencil which is subject to Time's ruin.

10-12 *my pupil pen . . . in eyes of men*] This avowal of inability on the part of the poet's youthful pen to conserve his friends' fame is bluntly contradicted in xviii, 13-14, *infra*, and many times elsewhere.

11 *fair*] beauty. So xviii, 7, 10, *infra*.

13 *To give away . . . still*] To produce likenesses of yourself will keep your memory alive.

xvii, 5-6 *If I could . . . your graces*] Cf *L. L. L.*, IV, iii, 318-319. "Such fiery *numbers* as the prompting eye *Of beauty's* tutors have enrich'd you with."

9 *So should my papers, etc.*] See xvi, 10, and note.

## SONNETS

And your true rights be term'd a poet's rage  
And stretched metre of an antique song:  
But were some child of yours alive that time,  
You should live twice, in it and in my rhyme.

## XVIII

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:  
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

11 *a poet's rage*] Cf. c, 8: "Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song."

12 *And stretched . . . song*] The motto of Keats' *Endymion*.

xviii This sonnet was omitted from Shakespeare's "Poems" of 1640.

3 *Rough winds . . . buds of May*] So *T. of Shrew*, V, ii, 140: "as whirlwinds shake fair buds," and *Cymb.*, I, iii, 36-37: "the tyrannous breathing of the north Shakes all our buds from growing."

5 *the eye of heaven*] the sun. Cf. *Lucrece*, 1088, and note.

7-10 *fair . . . fair . . . fair*] beauty. Cf. xvi, 11, *supra*, and lxviii, 3, *infra*.

8 *untrimm'd*] divested of ornament.

12 *in eternal lines*] The poet's boast of the immortality of his verse and of

## SONNETS

### XIX

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws,  
 And make the earth devour her own sweet brood;  
 Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,  
 And burn the long-lived phoenix in her blood;  
 Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st,  
 And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,  
 To the wide world and all her fading sweets;  
 But I forbid thee one most heinous crime:  
 O, carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,  
 Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen;  
 Him in thy course untainted do allow 10  
 For beauty's pattern to succeeding men.  
     Yet do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong,  
     My love shall in my verse ever live young.

its power of "eternizing" him or her whom it commemorates constantly recurs *infra*. It was a sentiment common to all the great poets of the European Renaissance, and echoed a similar claim preferred by the classical poets from Pindar to Horace and Ovid. Cf. Spenser's *Amoretti* (1595), Sonnet lxxv: "My verse your virtues rare shall eternize, And in the heavens write your glorious name." Drayton and Daniel reiterated the conceit with all the boldness of Shakespeare and Spenser, and in very similar phraseology.

**XIX** This sonnet was omitted from Shakespeare's "Poems" of 1640.

**1** *Devouring Time*] Another echo of Ovid's philosophic argument (see xv, 9, *supra*). Cf. Ovid's *Metam.*, xv, 234: "Tempus edax rerum," etc., which Golding translates: "Thou Time, the eater up of things and age of spitefull teen, Destroy all things" (ed. 1612, p. 186 a). Ovid illustrates Time's action some lines below by the story of the phoenix, to which also allusion is made in this sonnet, line 4.

**4** *in her blood*] alive.

## SONNETS

### XX

A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted  
 Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;  
 A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted  
 With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;  
 An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,  
 Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;  
 A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,  
 Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.  
 And for a woman wert thou first created;  
 Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting, 10

xx, 5 *An eye more bright . . . rolling*] Cf. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, III, i, 41: "Her wanton eyes (ill signs of womanhead) Did roll too lightly."

7 *A man in hue, all hues in his controlling*] A man in aspect, who exerts control or influence over the complexions or countenances of all manner of persons. The Quarto has the common Elizabethan spelling "hew" and "Hews," the latter word being italicised. (No particular significance seems attachable to the capital H or to the italics, which the Cambridge editors indicate superfluously by inverted commas) "Hue" has here the general sense of "shape" or "external aspect"; "hues" the more specialised sense of "complexions" or "countenances" (cf. civ, 11: "your sweet hue"). When Pyrocles in Sidney's *Arcadia* (1674 ed., p. 43) disguises himself as a woman, he writes a sonnet to his lady-love, ending thus (with a slight pun): "What marvel then I take *a woman's hue* (*i. e.*, aspect or shape) Since that I see, think, know is all but *you*." For "hues in his *controlling*, which steals men's eyes," etc., cf. *Pericles*, IV, i, 42-43: "That excellent *complexion* which did steal The eyes of young and old"; *Hen. VIII*, II, iv, 26-27 (Queen Katharine to Henry VIII): "Yea, *subject to your countenance*, glad or sorry As I saw it inclined," and *infra*, cxlix, 12: "commanded (*i. e.*, controlled or influenced) by the motion of thine eyes."

## SONNETS

And by addition me of thee defeated,  
 By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.  
     But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,  
     Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure.

### XXI

So it is not with me as with that Muse  
 Stirr'd by a painted beauty to his verse,  
 Who heaven itself for ornament doth use  
 And every fair with his fair doth rehearse,  
 Making a couplement of proud compare,  
 With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich gems,  
 With April's first-born flowers, and all things rare  
 That heaven's air in this huge rondure hems.

11 *defeated*] disappointed. Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, IV, i, 154: "Thereby to have *defeated* you and me."

xxi, 1-8 *So it is not . . . rondure hems*] The poet deprecates the extravagant conceits of contemporary poets or sonneteers of love; see lxxvi, 5-6, and cxxx, for more or less satiric comment of like kind.

4 *And every fair . . . rehearse*] And he doth mention every kind of beauty in association with his fair mistress. Shakespeare uses the word "rehearse" (always in the present sense) four times in the *Sonnets* (xxxviii, 4; lxxi, 11; lxxxi, 11) and thirteen times in early plays. It is only found once in later works (*Wint Tale*, V, ii, 60).

5-6 *Making . . . compare With sun*] Coupling ("his fair") in the way of high-flown simile with sun. Spenser uses the rare word "couplement" in *Faerie Queene*, Bk. IV, canto iii, st. 52, l 3.

6 *earth and sea's rich gems*] The extravagant figurative use of precious stones in love sonnets of the time is mentioned in *Lover's Compl.*, lines 209-210: "And deep-brain'd sonnets that did amplify Each stone's dear nature, worth, and quality" (see note).

8 *rondure*] circle; from the French "rondeur" which Cotgrave translates "roundness," "globinesse." Cf. *K. John*, II, i, 259: "The

## SONNETS

O, let me, true in love, but truly write,  
And then believe me, my love is as fair  
As any mother's child, though not so bright  
As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air:

10

Let them say more that like of hearsay well;  
I will not praise that purpose not to sell.

### XXII

My glass shall not persuade me I am old,  
So long as youth and thou are of one date;  
But when in thee time's furrows I behold,

*roundure* of your old-faced walls," and Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, 1600 (1873 ed., vol. i, p. 90): "the sacred *roundure* of mine eyes."

12 *candles*] Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, V, i, 220: "*candles* of the night." So Fairfax's translation of Tasso's *Gierusalemme Liberata*, Canto ix, st. 10: "heaven's small *candles*."

14 *I will not . . . to sell*] Cf. *L. L.*, IV, iii, 236: "To things of sale a seller's *praise* belongs," and cii, 3-4, *infra*.

XXII, 1 *My glass shall not persuade me I am old*] The poet's reflection that he is old is repeated lxii, 9-10 ("But when *my glass* shows me myself indeed"), lxxiii, 1-2, and cxxxviii, 6, *infra*. Such a reflection is conventional among sonneteers of the day. Daniel in *Delia* (1591), xxiii, at twenty-nine wrote: "My years draw on in everlasting night." Richard Barnfield at twenty in his sonnets to Ganymede (1594) wrote: "Behold my grey head full of silver hairs, My wrinkled skin deep furrowed in my face." Drayton in 1594 in *Idea*, xiv: "Looking into the *glass* of my youth's miseries, I see the ugly face of my deformed cares With wrinkled brow all withered with despairs." Petrarch seems to be the originator of this sonnetting convention. Cf. his "In morte di Laura," Sonnet lxxxi:

"Dicemi spesso il mio fidato specchio,  
L'animo stanco e la cangiata scorza  
E la scemata mia destrezza e forza  
Non ti nasconder più: tu se' pur veglio."

## SONNETS

Then look I death my days should expiate.  
 For all that beauty that doth cover thee  
 Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,  
 Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me:  
 How can I then be elder than thou art?  
 O, therefore, love, be of thyself so wary  
 As I, not for myself, but for thee will;  
 Bearing thy heart, which I will keep so chary  
 As tender nurse her babe from faring ill.

10

Presume not on thy heart when mine is slain;  
 Thou gavest me thine, not to give back again.

### XXIII

As an unperfect actor on the stage,  
 Who with his fear is put besides his part,  
 Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,  
 Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart;  
 So I, for fear of trust, forget to say  
 The perfect ceremony of love's rite,  
 And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,  
 O'ercharged with burthen of mine own love's might.

("My faithful glass, my weary spirit and my wrinkled skin, and my  
 decaying wit and strength repeatedly tell me: 'It cannot longer be  
 hidden from you, you are old.'")

4 *expiate*] end; a rare usage. Thus the Quarto. Steevens sub-  
 stituted *expire*. Cf. *Rich. III*, III, iii, 23. "the hour of death is  
*expiate*," where the Second Folio substitutes *now expired*

10 *but for thee will*] but for thy sake will be wary or careful of myself.

xxiii, 1-2 *As an unperfect actor . . . his part*] Cf. *Cor.*, V, iii, 40-41:

"Like a dull actor now I have forgot my part."

5 *for fear of trust*] afraid to trust myself, for lack of confidence.



## SONNETS

O, let my books be, then the eloquence  
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast;      10  
Who plead for love, and look for recompense,  
More than that tongue that more hath express'd.  
O, learn to read what silent love hath writ:  
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

## XXIV

Mine eye hath play'd the painter and hath stell'd  
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart;  
My body is the frame wherein 't is held,

9 *books*] manuscripts. Thus the Quarto. Sewell ingeniously substituted *looks*, but *books* alone agrees with line 18: "O, learn to *read*."

10 *dumb presagers*] players of dumb shows with which plays were often introduced on the stage.

12 *that tongue . . . express'd*] that "unperfect" tongue which would, had it been endowed with greater strength, have expressed more feeling

xxiv, 1 *stell'd*] Capell's emendation of the original reading *steeld*.  
 "Stelled" means "depicted" or "painted," as in *Lucrece*, 1444.  
 "Steeld" would mean "engraved."

<sup>2</sup> *table of my heart*] Cf. *K. John*, II, i, 503: "the flattering *table* of her eye," and *All's Well*, I, i, 89: "*our heart's table*." The common notion of a lover painting or engraving the form of his beloved one on the "table" or canvas of his heart is of especially frequent occurrence in the sonnets of the period in England, France, and Italy. Cf. *Ronsard, Sonnets pour Astrée*, vi, 1-4

‘ Il ne falloit, maistresse, autres *tablettes*,  
Pour vous graver que celles de mon cœur  
Où de sa main Amour, nostre vainqueur,  
Vous a gravée et vos grâces parfaites ”

So Tasso, *Rime*, bk. ii, Sonnet xxvi: "se l'immagine vostra," etc., and Watson's *Tears of Fancie* (1593), xlv, xlv.

## SONNETS

And perspective it is best painter's art.  
 For through the painter must you see his skill,  
 To find where your true image pictured lies;  
 Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,  
 That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes.  
 Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have done:  
 Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me 10  
 Are windows to my breast, where-through the sun  
 Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee;  
 Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art,  
 They draw but what they see, know not the heart.

### XXV

Let those who are in favour with their stars  
 Of public honour and proud titles boast,  
 Whilst I, whom fortune of such triumph bars,  
 Unlook'd for joy in that I honour most.

4 *perspective*] in point of perspective, which is the art of producing the illusion of distance. The word is accented on the first syllable. There may be some vague allusion to the perspective glasses, which were cut to produce various optical effects. Cf. *Rich. II.* II, ii, 18 "like *perspectives*," and note.

8 *his windows glazed . . . eyes*] an hyperbolic description of the completeness with which the friend's eyes dominate the poet's heart. The figure is repeated, lines 11-12, *infra*. The imagery is a sonneteering convention. Cf. Constable's *Diana*, Decade i, Sonnet v: "*Thine eye the glass where I behold my heart Mine eye the window through the which thine eye May see my heart.*"

11 *windows to my breast*] Cf. *L. L. L.*, V, ii, 826: "*the window of my heart, mine eye.*" Cf. for the common poetic use of "windows" for "eyes," *Venus and Adonis*, 482: "*her two blue windows*" (i. e., eyes); and see line 8, *supra*.

xxv, 4 *Unlook'd for*] Being overlooked, neglected.

## SONNETS

Great princes' favourites their fair leaves spread  
 But as the marigold at the sun's eye,  
 And in themselves their pride lies buried,  
 For at a frown they in their glory die.  
 The painful warrior famoused for fight,  
 After a thousand victories once foil'd,  
 Is from the book of honour razed quite,  
 And all the rest forgot for which he toil'd:  
     Then happy I, that love and am beloved  
     Where I may not remove nor be removed.

### . XXVI

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage  
 Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,

5-6 *their fair leaves . . . sun's eye*] Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, i, 150-151, where it is said of a bud that it "can spread his sweet leaves to the air Or dedicate his beauty to the sun." Such references to the opening and closing of the petals of the garden marigold are frequent in Elizabethan poetry. Cf. Constable's *Diana*, Decade ix, Sonnet i; *Lucrece*, 397-399; *Cymb.*, II, iii, 23-24.

9-12 *The painful warrior . . . which he toil'd*] *Fight* is Theobald's change of the Quarto *worth*, which does not rhyme. The general sentiment is repeated in *Troil. and Cress.*, III, iii, 169-170: "Oh, let not virtue seek Remuneration for the thing it was."

13-14 *Then happy I . . . be removed*] Cf. cxvi, 3: "bends with the remover to remove." Constable uses "remove" intransitively in the same connection: "But sith resolved love cannot remove" (*Diana*, Decade i, Sonnet iv).

XXVI The language here clothes in poetic splendour the prose dedication to Lord Southampton which Shakespeare dutifully prefixed to his poem of *Lucrece* (1594). The dedication begins: "*The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end . . . were my worth greater, my duty would show greater.*" Cf. cx, 9, *infra*.

## SONNETS

- To thee I send this written ambassage,  
 To witness duty, not to show my wit:  
 Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine  
 • May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it,  
 But that I hope some good conceit of thine  
 In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it;  
 Till whatsoever star that guides my moving,  
 Points on me graciously with fair aspect, 10  
 And puts apparel on my tatter'd loving,  
 To show me worthy of thy sweet respect:  
 • Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee;  
 Till then not show my head where thou mayst  
 prove me.

### XXVII

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,  
 The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;  
 But then begins a journey in my head,  
 To work my mind, when body's work's expired:  
 For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,

7-8 *some good conceit . . . bestow it*] some generous sentiment on thy part will give lodging in thy soul's thought to this dutiful greeting of mine despite the bareness of my language. Cf. for "all naked," ciii, 3: "The argument, *all bare*."

9-10 *star . . . moving . . . aspect*] these words have all their customary astrological significance.

11 *tatter'd*] Cf ii, 4, *supra*, and note.

xxvii, 3 *then begins a journey in my head*] Cf. Griffin's *Fidessa* (1596), Sonnets xiv and xv: "When silent sleep had closed up mine eyes *My watchful mind* did then begin to muse." The theme of travel, signified by this and the next sonnet, is developed *infra* in Sonnets l and li.

## SONNETS

Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,  
 And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,  
 Looking on darkness which the blind do see:  
 Save that my soul's imaginary sight  
 Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,  
 Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,  
 Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.  
     Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,  
     For thee and for myself no quiet find.

46  
10

### XXVIII

How can I then return in happy plight,  
 That am debarr'd the benefit of rest?  
 When day's oppression is not eased by night,  
 But day by night, and night by day, oppress'd?

6 *Intend*] Design, purpose.

10 *thy shadow*] Cf. xliii, 11: "thy fair imperfect shade," and lxi, 1: "Is it thy will, thy image," etc., and Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, xxxviii: "This night, which sleep begins," etc. Sleepless nights illumined by apparitions of his mistress Laura form the topic of some of the most characteristic sonnets and canzoni of Petrarch. Cf. "In vita di Laura," Sestina I, and Sonnet xxvi, and "In morte di Laura," Sonnets xiv-xviii. Imitations abound in Italian and French sonnets of the sixteenth century.

11-12 *Which, like a jewel . . . night beauteous*] Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, v, 43-44: "she hangs upon the cheek of night *Like a rich jewel* in an Ethiop's ear."

14 *For thee and for myself*] On account of thinking about thee by night and working for myself by day.

xxviii, 3-8 *When day's oppression . . . from thee*] Cf. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnet lxxxix: "Tired with the dusty toils of busy day, Languisht with horrors of the silent night, Suffering the evils both of the day and night."

## SONNETS

And each, though enemies to either's reign,  
 Do in consent shake hands to torture me;  
 The one by toil, the other to complain  
 How far I toil, still farther off from thee.  
 I tell the day, to please him thou art bright,  
 And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven: 10  
 So flatter I the swart-complexion'd night;  
 When sparkling stars twire not thou gild'st the even.  
 But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,  
 And night doth nightly make grief's strength seem  
 stronger.

### XXIX

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
 I all alone bewEEP my outcast state,  
 And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
 And look upon myself, and curse my fate,  
 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
 Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,  
 Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
 With what I most enjoy contented least;  
 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising.  
 Haply I think on thee, and then my state, 10

12 *twire*] twinkle or peep.

14 *strength*] Capell's substitution for the Quarto *length*.

**XXIX**, 1-9 *When, in disgrace . . . almost despising*] This pessimistic tone which is repeated in *Sonnet lxxvi, infra*, recalls Tasso's sequence of melancholy sonnets called "*Amicitia tradita*." (See *Rime*, Venice, 1620, vol. iii, pt. ix, p. 79 *seq*.) One of these ("*Vinca fortuna homai*") was translated by Drummond of Hawthornden (*Sonnet xxxiii*). "If fortune triumph now," etc

## SONNETS

Like to the lark at break of day arising  
 From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
 For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings  
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

### XXX

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
 I summon up remembrance of things past,  
 I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
 And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:  
 Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,  
 For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,  
 And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,  
 And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight:

11-12 *Like to the lark . . . heaven's gate*] Cf. Lyly's *Campaspe*, V, i, 37-39: "*The lark . . . so shrill and clear . . . At heaven's gate she claps her wings, The morn not waking till she sings.*" So *Rom. and Jul.*, III, v, 21: "the lark, whose notes do beat The vaulty heaven," and *Cymb.*, II, iii, 19-20: "Hark, hark! *the lark at heaven's gate sings.*"

12 *sullen earth*] Cf. *2 Hen. VI*, I, ii, 5: "thine eyes fix'd to the *sullen earth.*"

xxx, 1 *sessions of . . . thought*] Cf. *Othello*, III, iii, 142-143: "apprehensions . . . in session sit."

5 *I drown an eye*] Cf. *Lucrece*, 1239: "they drown their eyes."  
*an eye, unused to flow*] Cf. *Othello*, V, ii, 351-352: "eyes, Albeit unused to the melting mood."

6 *death's dateless night*] Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, V, iii, 115: "A *dateless* bargain to engrossing death." "Dateless" is repeated, cliii, 6, *infra*.

8 *the expense of many a vanish'd sight*] the spending or wasting of many an object vanished from or lost to view.

## SONNETS

Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,  
 And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er 10  
 The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,  
 Which I new pay as if not paid before.  
     But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,  
     All losses are restored and sorrows end.

### XXXI

Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts,  
 Which I by lacking have supposed dead;  
 And there reigns love, and all love's loving parts,  
 And all those friends which I thought buried.  
 How many a holy and obsequious tear  
 Hath dear religious love stol'n from mine eye,  
 As interest of the dead, which now appear  
 But things removed that hidden in thee lie!  
 Thou art the grave where buried love doth live,  
 Hung with the trophies of my lovers gone, 10  
 Who all their parts of me to thee did give;  
 That due of many now is thine alone:  
     Their images I loved I view in thee,  
     And thou, all they, hast all the all of me.

XXXI, 5 *obsequious*] funeral. Cf. *Hamlet*, I, ii, 92: "*obsequious* sorrow";  
 but see cxxv, 9, *infra*: "*obsequious* in thy heart"  
 6 *dear religious love*] love making a religion of its affection. Cf. *Lover's*  
*Compl.*, 250: "*Religious love* put out Religion's eye."  
 7 *interest of the dead*] Cf. *Lucrece*, 1797: "My sorrow's *interest*" (*i. e.*,  
 due or right).



# SONNETS

## XXXII

If thou survive my well-contented day,  
 When that churl Death my bones with dust shall cover,  
 And shalt by fortune once more re-survey  
 These poor rude lines of thy deceased lover,  
 Compare them with the bettering of the time,  
 And though they be outstripp'd by every pen,  
 Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme,  
 Exceeded by the height of happier men.  
 O, then vouchsafe me but this loving thought:  
 "Had my friend's Muse grown with this growing age, 10  
 A dearer birth than this his love had brought,  
 To march in ranks of better equipage:  
 But since he died, and poets better prove,  
 Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love."

xxxii, 1 *my well-contented day*] the day which well contents me.

4 *lover*] male friend; so xxxi, 10, and constantly in Elizabethan English.

Brutus calls Cæsar "my best lover" (*Jul. Cæs.*, III, ii, 44). Portia describes Antonio as "the bosom lover" of Bassanio (*Merch. of Ven.*,

III, iv, 17). See also *Troil. and Cress.*, III, iii, 214, and *Cor.*, V, ii, 14.

5 *the bettering of the time*] Cf. 10, *infra*: "this growing age" and also cxxxii, 8, *infra*: "the time-bettering days."

7 *Reserve*] Preserve. See lxxxv, 3, and *Pericles*, IV, i, 41-42: "reserve That excellent complexion."

12 *To march in ranks . . . equipage*] Cf. Nashe's Pref. to Greene's *Mena-pho*, 1589: "[Watson's works] march in equipage of honour with any of your ancient poets"; and Peele's *Farewell*, 1589 (dedic.): "[so that] my countrymen . . . may march in equipage of honour and of arms against the Trojans."

# SONNETS

## XXXIII

Full many a glorious morning have I seen  
 Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,  
 Kissing with golden face the meadows green,  
 Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;  
 Anon permit the basest clouds to ride  
 With ugly rack on his celestial face,  
 And from the forlorn world his visage hide,  
 Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:  
 Even so my sun one early morn did shine  
 With all-triumphant splendour on my brow;  
 But, out, alack! he was but one hour mine,  
 The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.

10

xxxiii, 1-2 *Full many . . . eye*] Shakespeare thus describes many times the splendour of sunrise. Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 857-858: "Who doth the world so gloriously behold, That cedar-tops and hills seem burnish'd gold." For the application of the word "flatter" to the effect of sunlight, cf. *Edward III*, I, ii, 141-142: "Let not thy presence like the April sun *Flatter* the earth"

4 *Gilding . . . alchemy*] Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, III, ii, 391-393: "the eastern gate, all fiery-red, Turns into yellow gold his [i.e., Neptune's] salt green streams"; and *K. John*, III, i, 77-80: "the glorious sun . . . plays the alchemist, Turning . . . the meagre cloddy earth to glittering gold."

5-7 *Anon permit . . . hide*] Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, I, ii, 190-192: "the sun Who doth permit the base contagious clouds To smother up his beauty from the world," and *Two Gent.*, I, iii, 85-87:

"The uncertain glory of an April day,  
 Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,  
 And by and by a cloud takes all away."

and xxxiv, 3-4, *infra*.

6 *rack*] wreath or bank of floating clouds

12 *The region cloud*] The cloud of the upper air, cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, II, ii, 21: "the airy region" and *Hamlet*, II, ii, 574: "the region kites."

## SONNETS

Yet him for this my love no *whit disdaineth*;  
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun  
staineth.

### XXXIV

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,  
And make me travel forth without my cloak,  
To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,  
Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke?  
'T is not enough that through the cloud thou break,  
To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,  
For no man well of such a salve can speak  
That heals the wound and cures not the disgrace:  
Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;  
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss: 10  
The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief  
To him that bears the strong offence's cross.  
Ah, but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,  
And they are rich and ransom all ill deeds.

14 *stain*] grow dim, darken: a rare intransitive use Cf. *Rich II*, III, iii, 65-67: "[The sun] perceives the envious clouds are bent To dim his glory and to *stain* the track." So xxxv, 3, *infra*.

xxxiv, 3-4 *let base clouds . . . rotten smoke*] See note on xxxiii, 5-7, *supra*.

4 *their rotten smoke*] "The base contagious clouds" in the passage from 1 *Hen. IV*, quoted above, are described as "foul and ugly mists of vapours." Cf. *Lucrece*, 778: "With rotten damps ravish the morning air."

12 *bears the strong offence's cross*] suffers damage from the great offence; *cross* is Malone's substitution for the original reading *loss*, which is a misprinted repetition of *loss*, the last word of line 10. "To bear a cross" is a common phrase. Cf. *As you like it*, II, iv, 10 and see *infra*, xlii, 12: "lay on me this *cross*."

# SONNETS

## XXXV

No more be grieved at that which thou hast done:  
 Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;  
 Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,  
 And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.  
 All men make faults, and even I in this,  
 Authorizing thy trespass with compare,  
 Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,  
 Excusing thy sins more than thy sins are;  
 For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense —  
 Thy adverse party is thy advocate — 10  
 And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence:  
 Such civil war is in my love and hate,  
 That I an accessary needs must be  
 To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.

xxxv, 4 *canker*] caterpillar. The allusion is common in Shakespeare's early works; see lxx, 7, and note, xc, 2, and xcix, 13.

6 *with compare*] with the similes cited from the conditions of nature. Cf. xxi, 5, *supra*.

7 *salving thy amiss*] palliating thy fault. Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 53: "blames her 'miss," and cli, 3, *infra*.

8 *Excusing . . . thy sins are*] Making for thy sins the sort of excuse which is more sinful than thy sins themselves.

9-10 *For to thy sensual fault . . . thy advocate*] I appeal to good sense or reason ("thy adverse party") to act as advocate to palliate thy sensual offence.

12 *in my love and hate*] in my love of the sinner and hatred of his sin.

13-14 *an accessary . . . sweet thief*] Cf. *All's Well*, II, i, 34-35: "There's honour in the theft; . . . I am your *accessary*." Cf. also xl, 9, *infra*. Barnfield in his first sonnet to Ganymede, which embodies much legal terminology, has the lines: "There came a *thief* and stole away my heart, And therefore *robbed me of my chiefest part*."

## SONNETS

### XXXVI

Let me confess that we two must be twain,  
 Although our undivided loves are one:  
 So shall those blots that do with me remain,  
 Without thy help, by me be borne alone.  
 In our two loves there is but one respect,  
 Though in our lives a separable spite,  
 Which though it alter not love's sole effect,  
 Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight.  
 I may not evermore acknowledge thee,  
 Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame,  
 Nor thou with public kindness honour me,  
 Unless thou take that honour from thy name:  
     But do not so; I love thee in such sort,  
     As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

### XXXVII

As a decrepit father takes delight  
 To see his active child do deeds of youth,  
 So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,  
 Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth;  
 For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,

---

xxxvi, 5 *one respect*] one regard or a single affection.

6 *a separable spite*] a severing, malignant fate; a cruel separation.

13-14 *But do not so; . . . good report*] This couplet is repeated at the end of Sonnet xcvi

xxxvii, 3 *lame*] used in a figurative sense as in lxxxix, 3, *infra* Cf *Lear*, IV, vi, 228 (Quarto): "A most poor man, *made lame by Fortune's blows*." (The Folio reads *made tame to*.)  
*dearest*] desperate, extreme

## SONNETS

- Or any of these all, or all, or more,,  
 Entitled in thy parts do crowned sit,  
 I make my love engrafted to this store:  
 • So then I am not lame, poor, nor despised,  
 Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give 10  
 That I in thy abundance am sufficed  
 And by a part of all thy glory live.  
 Look, what is best, that best I wish in thee:  
 This wish I have; then ten times happy me!

### XXXVIII

How can my Muse want subject to invent,  
 While thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse  
 Thine own sweet argument, too excellent  
 For every vulgar paper to rehearse?  
 O, give thyself the thanks, if aught in me  
 Worth thy perusal stand against thy sight;  
 For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,  
 When thou thyself dost give invention light?

7 *Entitled in thy parts*] Probably "Ennobled in thee"; "deriving (titles of) honour from association with thy capacities." Cf. *Lucrece*, 57 (see note): "in that white *intituled*," where the word has a more difficult technical significance. Elsewhere (cf. *L L L*, V, ii, 800) "intituled in" means "having a just claim to." The Quarto here reads *their* for *thy*, a textual confusion of frequent occurrence; *their* is unintelligible.

xxxviii Cf., for like descriptions of the inspiration inherent in the friend's personal charm, *Sonnets* lxxxiii and ciii

3 *Thine own sweet argument*] Theme of thine own sweet self. Cf. Spenser's sonnet to Raleigh (*Faerie Queene*, 1590): "Thou only fit this *argument* to write," and Barnes' *Parthenophil*, 1593, Sonnet lxxv: "*mine argument*." See lxxvi, 10 and lxxix, 5.

## SONNETS

Be thou the tenth, Muse, ten times more in worth  
 Than those old nine which rhymers invoke; 10  
 And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth  
 Eternal numbers to outlive long date. \*

If my slight Muse do please these curious days,  
 The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise.

### XXXIX

O, how thy worth with manners may I sing,  
 When thou art all the better part of me?  
 What can mine own praise to mine own self bring?  
 And what is 't but mine own when I praise thee?  
 Even for this let us divided live,  
 And our dear love lose name of single one,  
 That by this separation I may give  
 That due to thee which thou deservest alone.  
 O absence, what a torment wouldst thou prove,  
 Were it not thy sour leisure gave sweet leave 10

---

10 *those old nine which rhymers invoke*] Cf. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnet iii: "Let dainty wits cry on *the Sisters nine*." See *infra*, lxxvi, 3-4

13 *curious*] critical.

14 *The pain be mine . . . the praise*] So Daniel of his sonnets dedicated to the Countess of Pembroke (*Delia*, 1592): "Whereof the *travail* I may challenge *mine*; But yet the *glory*, Madam, must be *thine*."

xxxix, 1 *with manners*] with decency or self-respect. Cf. lxxxv, 1.

2 *the better part of me*] my soul. See note on *Com. of Errors*, II, ii, 122: "thy self's *better part*," and cf. lxxiv, 8, *infra*. The phrase "the better part of me" is similarly used by Daniel (*Cleopatra*, 1594, dedicated to Countess of Pembroke) and by Ovid, *Metam.*, xv, *ad fin.* in Golding's translation of that passage whence the sonnets so frequently draw suggestions; see xv, *supra*, lv, lix, lxiii, lxiv, and cxxiii.

## SONNETS

To entertain the time with thoughts of love,  
Which time and thoughts so sweetly doth deceive,  
And that thou teachest how to make one twain,  
By praising him here who doth hence remain!

### XL

Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all;  
What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?

- 11 *To entertain the time*] Cf. *Lucrece*, 1361: "The weary *time* she cannot entertain."
- 12 *Which time and thoughts . . . deceive*] Which doth beguile time and thoughts. Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 24: "*time-beguiling* sport."
- 13-14 *And that thou . . . doth hence remain*] An absent friend can be made two persons — one present in the imagination, and the other really far away. So *Ant and Cleop*, I, iii, 102-104: "Our separation so abides and flies, That thou residing here go'st yet with me, And I hence fleeting here remain with thee."
- x1 This and the following two sonnets associate themselves with *Sonnets* cxxxiii, cxxxiv, and cxliv, in all of which reference is made to the friend's intrigue with the poet's mistress. The rivalry here indicated in the poet's heart between friendship with a man and love for a woman is no uncommon theme of Renaissance poetry. Petrarch (*Sonnet* ccxxvii) confesses to the double sentiment:

'Carità di signore, amor di donna  
Son le catene, ove con multi affanni  
Legato son, perch'io stesso mi strinsi."

Cf. Beza's *Poemata*, 1548, *Epigrammata*, xc: "De sua in Candidam et Audebertum benevolentia." Clement Marot in a poetic address: "A celle qui souhaite Marot aussi amoureux d'elle qu'un sien Amy" (*Œuvres*, 1565, p. 437), describing his solicitation in love by a friend's mistress, diagnoses a like conflict of emotions. The closest parallel to the Shakespearean situation (see esp. *Sonnet* xlii) is that described by Saint Evremond, who, complaining of a close friend's



## SONNETS

No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call;  
 All mine was thine before thou hadst this more.  
 Then, if for my love thou my love receivest,  
 I cannot blame thee for my love thou usest;  
 But yet be blamed, if thou thyself deceivest  
 By wilful taste of what thyself refuseth.  
 I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,  
 Although thou steal thee all my poverty;  
 And yet, love knows, it is a greater grief  
 To bear love's wrong than hate's known injury.  
     Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,  
     Kill me with spites; yet we must not be foes.

### XLI

Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits,  
 When I am sometime absent from thy heart,  
 Thy beauty and thy years full well befits,  
 For still temptation follows where thou art.

---

guilty relations with his mistress (apparently la Comtesse d'Olonne), wrote thus to her in 1654 of his twofold affection: "Apprenez-moi contre qui je me dois fâcher d'avantage, ou contre lui qui m'enlève une maîtresse, ou contre vous, qui me volez un ami . . . J'ai trop de passion pour donner rien au ressentiment; ma tendresse l'importera toujours sur vos outrages. J'aime la perfide, j'aime l'infidèle." (*Œuvres Mêlées de Saint Evremond*, ed Giraud, 1865, iii, 5)

5-6 *for my love . . . for my love*] for love of me . . . because my love [i. e., my mistress].

8 *what thyself refuseth*] that lascivious indulgence which thou in reality disdainest.

9 *thy robbery, gentle thief*] Cf. xxxv, 13, *supra*.

13 *Lascivious grace . . . shows*] Cf. xcv, 12, *infra*.

xli, 1 *liberty*] licentiousness.

## SONNETS

Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,  
 Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assailed;  
 And when a woman woos, what woman's son  
 Will sourly leave her till she have prevailed?  
 Ay me! but yet thou mightst my seat forbear,  
 And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,  
 Who lead thee in their riot even there  
 Where thou art forced to break a twofold truth,  
     Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee,  
     Thine, by thy beauty being false to me.

10

### XLII

That thou hast her, it is not all my grief,  
 And yet it may be said I loved her dearly;  
 That she hath thee, is of my wailing chief,  
 A loss in love that touches me more nearly.  
 Loving offenders, thus I will excuse ye:  
 Thou dost love her, because thou know'st I love her;  
 And for my sake even so doth she abuse me,  
 Suffering my friend for my sake to approve her.  
 If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain,

5 *Gentle thou art . . . to be won*] Almost identical expressions figure in  
 1 *Hen. VI*, V, iii, 78-79; *Rich. III*, I, ii, 228-229; *Tit. Andr.*, II, i,  
 82-83 Cf. Greene's *Orpharion*, 1599 (Works, ed. Grosart, xii, p. 31).  
 "she is but a woman, and therefore to be wonne"

8 *till she have*] Malone's substitution of the Quarto *till he have*, which may  
 be right.

9 *my seat*] Cf. *Othello*, II, i, 289-290: "the lusty Moor Hath leap'd  
 into my seat." So *Lucrece*, 413: "this fair throne."

12 *a twofold truth*] the fidelity of both friend and mistress to the poet.

XLII, 7 *abuse*] ill use.

8 *to approve her*] to win her approval or affection.

## SONNETS

And losing her, my friend hath found that loss; 10  
 Both find each other, and I lose both twain,  
 And both for my sake lay on me this cross:  
     But here 's the joy; my friend and I are one;  
     Sweet flattery! then she loves but me alone.

### XLIII

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,  
 For all the day they view things unrespected;  
 But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,  
 And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed.  
 Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright,  
 How would thy shadow's form form happy show  
 To the clear day with thy much clearer light,  
 When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so!  
 How would, I say, mine eyes be blessed made  
 By looking on thee in the living day, 10  
 When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade  
 Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay!  
     All days are nights to see till I see thee,  
     And nights bright days when dreams do show thee  
     me.

11 *both twain*] A reduplication only found elsewhere in *L. L. L.*, V, ii, 459.  
 13-14 *my friend and I are one . . . but me alone*] Cf. cxxxv, 14: "Think  
     all but *one*, and me in that *one Will*."

XLIII This sonnet was omitted from Shakespeare's "Poems" of 1640. Its  
 theme resembles that of xxvii and lxi.

1 *wink*] shut the eyes; a common usage. Cf lvi, 6.

2 *unrespected*] without taking particular notice, unnoticeable.

4 *are bright in dark directed*] are guided in the dark by the brightness (of  
     thy "shadow" or apparition).

5 *whose shadow*] Cf. xxvii, 10: "thy *shadow*," and note, and lxi, 1 *seq*.

## SONNETS

### XLIV

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,  
 Injurious distance should not stop my way;  
 For then, despite of space, I would be brought,  
 From limits far remote, where thou dost stay.  
 No matter then although my foot did stand  
 Upon the farthest earth removed from thee;  
 For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,  
 As soon as think the place where he would be.  
 But, ah, thought kills me, that I am not thought,  
 To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,      10  
 But that so much of earth and water wrought,  
 I must attend time's leisure with my mood,  
     Receiving nought by elements so shrewd  
     But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.

### XLV

The other two, slight air and purging fire,  
 Are both with thee, wherever I abide;

XLIV, 7-8 *For nimble thought . . . he would be*] Sonnets dealing in like manner with thought's triumph over space are very common in Renaissance poetry. Cf. Ronsard, *Amours*, I, clxviii: "Ce fol penser, pour s'envoler trop haut", Du Bellay's *Olive*, xliii: "Penser volage, et léger comme vent"; Amadis Jamyn, Sonnet xxi: "Penser, qui peut en un moment grande erre Courir", and Tasso's *Rime* (1583, Venice, i, p. 33). "Come s' human pensier di giunger tenta Al luogo."

9 *thought*] care or anxiety

XLV, "The other two . . . fire] Air and fire, making up with "earth and ether" (already mentioned, xlv, 11) the four elements, constitute . . . and nature. Cf. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, bk. vii, canto i,

## SONNETS

The first my thought, the other my desire,  
 These present-absent with swift motion slide.  
 For when these quicker elements are gone  
 In tender embassy of love to thee,  
 My life, being made of four, with two alone  
 Sinks down to death, oppress'd with melancholy ;  
 Until life's composition be recured  
 By those swift messengers return'd from thee, 10  
 Who even but now come back again, assured  
 Of thy fair health, recounting it to me:  
     This told, I joy; but then no longer glad,  
     I send them back again, and straight grow sad.

### XLVI

Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war,  
 How to divide the conquest of thy sight;

---

st. 24-25 and *Amoretti*, Sonnet lv, and Barnes' *Parthenophil* (1593), Sonnet lxxvii This popular natural philosophy was universally accepted (cf. *Tw. Night*, II, iii, 9: "Does not *our life* consist of the *four elements*?"). Here Shakespeare probably drew directly upon the philosophic reflections which close Ovid's *Metam* (bk. xv). Of the "four substances of which all things are gendred . . ." wrote Ovid, according to Golding's translation (ed 1612, p 186 a and b). "The *earth and water* for their masses and weight are sunken lower, The other couple *ayre and fire*, the purer of the twaine, Mount up and nought can keepe them downe." See also xv, xxxix, lv, lix, lxiii, lxiv, and cxxiii.

5 *these quicker elements*] Cf. *Hen. V*, III, vii, 21-22: "he is pure *air and fire*, and the *dull elements of earth and water* never appear in him," and *Ant. and Cleop.*, V, ii, 287-288: "I am *fire and air*; my other elements I give to baser life." So Drayton's eulogy of Marlowe: "his raptures were all *air and fire*."

XLVI, 1 *Mine eye and heart . . . war*] The war between the eye and the

## SONNETS

Mine eye my heart thy picture's sight would bar,  
 My heart mine eye the freedom of that right.  
 My heart doth plead that thou in him dost lie,  
 A closet never pierced with crystal eyes,  
 But the defendant doth that plea deny,  
 And says in him thy fair appearance lies.  
 To 'cide this title is impanneled  
 A quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart; 10  
 And by their verdict is determined  
 The clear eye's moiety and the dear heart's part:  
     As thus; mine eye's due is thine outward part,  
     And my heart's right thine inward love of heart.

---

heart is a favourite topic among Renaissance sonneteers, the cue being given them by their master Petrarch, whose Sonnet lv is a dialogue between the poet and his eyes, and Sonnet xcix is a companion dialogue between the poet and his heart. Ronsard treats the conceit in an ode (bk iv, ode 20). Among English versions contemporary with Shakespeare the most familiar are Watson's *Tears of Fancie* (1593), xix and vx, a pair of sonnets closely resembling Shakespeare's *Sonnets* xlv and xlvii, Drayton's *Idea*, xxiii, Barnes' *Parthenophil*, xx, and Constable's *Diana*, Decade vi, Sonnet vii

9-10 *impaneled A quest*] empanelled a jury. The legal terminology of this sonnet is common in Spenser, Barnes, Barnfield, and many other writers of the day. Cf the *Faerie Queene*, bk. vi, vii, 34: "Therefore a *jurie* was *impaneled* streight."  
*tenants*] Barnes in *Parthenophil* (1593) who constantly uses legal language opens his Sonnet xx thus:

"These eyes (thy Beauty's *Tenants*!) pay due *tears*  
 For occupation of mine *heart*, thy freehold,  
 In tenure of Love's service"

See lxxxvii, 3 *seq.*, and note

12 *moiety*] part; not necessarily "half" Cf Shakespeare's dedication to Southampton in *Lucrece*. "this pamphlet is but a superfluous *moiety*."

## SONNETS

### XLVII

Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,  
 And each doth good turns now unto the other:  
 When that mine eye is famish'd for a look,  
 Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother,  
 With my love's picture then my eye doth feast  
 And to the painted banquet bids my heart;  
 Another time mine eye is my heart's guest  
 And in his thoughts of love doth share a part:  
 So, either by thy picture or my love,  
 Thyself away art present still with me; 10  
 For thou not farther than my thoughts canst move,  
 And I am still with them and they with thee;  
 Or, if they sleep, thy picture in my sight  
 Awakes my heart to heart's and eye's delight.

### XLVIII

How careful was I, when I took my way,  
 Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,  
 That to my use it might unused stay  
 From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust!

XLVII, 3-6 *When that mine eye . . . bids my heart*] This passage clearly suggested the lines (V, i, 18-22) in Suckling's *Tragedy of Brennoralt*:

"Will you not send me neither  
 Your picture when y' are gone?  
 That when my eye is famisht for a looke,  
 It may have where to feed,  
 And to the painted Feast invite my heart."

For "famish'd for a look," cf. *Com. of Errors*, II, i, 88: "starve for a merry look," and lxxv, 10, *infra*.

10-12 *Thyself away . . . they with thee*] Cf. xxxix, 13-14 and the illustrative quotation there cited from *Ant. and Cleop.*, I, iii, 102-104.

## SONNETS

But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,  
 Most worthy comfort, now my gr̄atest grief,  
 Thou, best of dearest and mine only care,  
 Art left the prey of every vulgar thief.  
 Thee have I not lock'd up in any chest,  
 Save where thou art not, though I feel thou art, 10  
 Within the gentle closure of my breast,  
 From whence at pleasure thou mayst come and part;  
 And even thence thou wilt be stol'n, I fear,  
 For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.

### XLIX

Against that time, if ever that time come,  
 When I shall see thee frown on my defects,  
 When as thy love hath cast his utmost sum,  
 Call'd to that audit by advised respects;  
 Against that time when thou shalt strangely pass,  
 And scarcely greet me with that sun, thine eye,  
 When love, converted from the thing it was,  
 Shall reasons find of settled gravity;

XLVIII, 11 *Within the gentle closure of my breast*] Cf *Venus and Adonis*, 782: "Into the quiet closure of my breast," and *Rich III*, III, iii, 11: "Within the guilty closure of thy walls"

14 *For truth . . . prize so dear*] Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 724: "Rich preys make true men thieves."

XLIX The sonnet closely resembles *Sonnet lxxxviii*.

4 *by advised respects*] for well-considered reasons; so *K. John*, IV, ii, 214: "advised respect."

5 *strangely*] like a stranger; so *cx*, 6. Cf *lxxxix*, 8.

7-8 *When love, converted . . . settled gravity*] Cf *Jul. Cæs.*, IV, ii, 20-21: "When love begins to sicken and decay, It useth an enforced ceremony."



## SONNETS

Against that time do I ensconce me here  
 Within the knowledge of mine own desert, 10  
 And this my hand against myself uprear,  
 To guard the lawful reasons on thy part:  
     To leave poor me thou hast the strength of laws,  
     Since why to love I can allege no cause.

How heavy do I journey on the way,  
 When what I seek, my weary travel's end,  
 Doth teach that ease and that repose to say,  
 "Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend!"  
 The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,  
 Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,  
 As if by some instinct the wretch did know  
 His rider loved not speed, being made from thee:  
 The bloody spur cannot provoke him on 10  
 That sometimes anger thrusts into his hide;  
 Which heavily he answers with a groan,  
 More sharp to me than spurring to his side;  
     For that same groan doth put this in my mind;  
     My grief lies onward, and my joy behind.

---

9 *ensconce*] seclude or protect or fortify.

10 *desert*] lack of desert, demerit. Cf. lxxxviii, 5: "with mine own weakness being best acquainted."

11 *this my hand . . . uprear*] Cf. lxxxix, 13 and cxlix, 2: "When I . . . against myself with thee partake."

12 *on thy part*] on thy side. Cf. lxxxviii, 6, *infra*.

L This and the next sonnet are run together in the "Poems" of 1640 under the single heading, "Goe and come quickly." They develop the theme of travel already noticed in *Sonnets* xxvii and xxviii.

## SONNETS

### LI

Thus can my love excuse the slow offence  
 Of my dull bearer when from thee I speed:  
 From where thou art why should I haste me thence?  
 Till I return, of posting is no need.  
 O, what excuse will my poor beast then find,  
 When swift extremity can seem but slow?  
 Then should I spur, though mounted on the wind,  
 In winged speed no motion shall I know:  
 Then can no horse with my desire keep pace;  
 Therefore desire, of perfect'st love being made, 10  
 Shall neigh — no dull flesh — in his fiery race;  
 But love, for love, thus shall excuse my jade;  
     Since from thee going he went wilful-slow,  
     Towards thee I'll run and give him leave to go.

### LII

So am I as the rich, whose blessed key  
 Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure,  
 The which he will not every hour survey,

LI, 1 *slow offence*] offence of slowness

6 *swift extremity*] the extreme of swiftness.

7 *mounted on the wind*] Cf. *As you like it*, III, ii, 80: "Her worth being mounted on the wind," and 2 *Hen IV*, *Induction*, 4. "Making the wind my post-horse"

11 *Shall neigh . . . fiery race*] Desire, which is all spirit and no dull flesh, shall neigh in the excitement of its impassioned flight (which altogether outdistances the pace of the horse) Cf *Venus and Adonis*, 307 (of the stallion) "He looks upon his love, and neighs unto her."

14 *to go*] to walk; a common usage Cf cxxx, 11.

## SONNETS

For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure.  
*Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare,*  
 Since, seldom coming, in the long year set,  
 Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,  
 Or captain jewels in the carcanet.  
 So is the time that keeps you as my chest,  
 Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide, 10  
 To make some special instant special blest,  
 By new unfolding his imprison'd pride.  
     Blessed are you, whose worthiness gives scope,  
     Being had, to triumph, being lack'd, to hope.

### LIII

What is your substance, whereof are you made,  
 That millions of strange shadows on you tend?

LII, 4 *For blunting*] For fear of blunting. For the sentiment cf. cii, 12:  
 "And sweets grown common lose their dear delight."

5-7 *Therefore are feasts . . . thinly placed are*] Cf. 1 *Hen. IV*, I, ii, 197-199: "If all the year were playing holidays, To sport would be as tedious as to work; But when they seldom come they wish'd for come." So Montaigne's *Essays* "On Inequality" (bk. i, ch. xlii): "Feasts rejoyce them that but seldome see them . . . ; the taste of which becometh cloyesome."

8 *captain jewels*] the principal jewels in a necklace.

*carcanet*] only used elsewhere by Shakespeare in *Com. of Errors*, III, i, 4 It is formed from the French "carcan," a necklace.

13-14 *Blessed are you . . . to hope*] Blessed are you whose excellence is such that your presence brings me triumph, your absence fills me with the hope of a meeting.

LIII, 1-12 *What is your substance . . . shape we know*] The common notion that every beautiful aspect of nature reflects or borrows attributes of the beloved one's form (cf. xcix, *infra*) is here subtilised into the complementary fancy that the beloved one's form has in

## SONNETS

Since every one hath, every one, one shade,  
 And you, but one, can every shadow lend.  
 Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit  
 Is poorly imitated after you;  
 On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,  
 And you in Grecian tires are painted new:  
 Speak of the spring and foison of the year,  
 The one doth shadow of your beauty show,  
 The other as your bounty doth appear;  
 And you in every blessed shape we know.

10

In all external grace you have some part,  
 But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

### LIV

O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem  
 By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!  
 The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem  
 For that sweet odour which doth in it live.  
 The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye

attendance and at command the forms or essences of all nature's manifestations This fancy is more directly and simply presented at cxiii, 5, *infra*, where Petrarch's less subtle treatment of the topic is followed (see note)

2 *strange shadows*] shadows or images of independent entities

5-6 *Describe Adonis* . . . *after you*] So Barnfield's Sonnets to Ganymede, xvii: "Cherry-lipt *Adonis* in his snowie shape Might not *compare* with his [*i e.*, Ganymede's] pure iuorie white "

8 *tires*] attires, dress. "Tires" is elsewhere used for "headdresses."

9 *foison*] harvest. A French word thrice used by Shakespeare elsewhere.

Cf. *Tempest*, II, i, 167; IV, i, 110, *Macb*, IV, iii, 88.

LIV, 5 *canker-blooms*] blossoms of the wild dog-rose, commonly called "canker-rose."

## SONNETS

As the perfumed tincture of the roses,  
 Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly  
 When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:  
 But, for their virtue only is their show,  
 They live unwoo'd and unrespected fade;  
 Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;  
 Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made:  
     And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,  
     When that shall vade, by verse distills your truth.

### LV

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments  
 Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;  
 But you shall shine more bright in these contents  
 Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time.  
 When wasteful war shall statues overturn,  
 And broils root out the work of masonry,

8 *their masked buds discloses*] Cf. *Hamlet*, I, iii, 39-40. "the infants of the spring . . . before their buttons [*v* e., buds] be disclosed"

9 *show*] outward appearance. Cf. xciii, 14, *infra*.

11 *Die to themselves*] Cf. xciv, 10: "Though to itself it only . . . die."

13-14 *And so of you . . . distills your truth*] Cf. v, 9, *supra*, and note

14 *When that shall vade*] When beauty of youth shall *fade*; "vade" is an original form of "fade" Cf. *Pass. Pilg.*, xiii, 2, 6, 8

*by verse*] the original reading for which Malone substituted *my verse*  
 lv, 1 *Not marble, etc*] An echo of Horace's "Exegi monumentum aere perennius," but mainly an adaptation (see esp. ll 7-8), of Ovid's claim to immortality in his *Metam*, xv, *ad fin*. From lines preceding this passage in Golding's familiar translation of Ovid Shakespeare clearly borrowed most of his philosophic reflections and illustrations in the sonnets; see xv, lix, lx, lxiii, lxiv, and cxxiii.

## SONNETS

Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn  
 The living record of your memory.  
 'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity  
 Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room 10  
 Even in the eyes of all posterity  
 That wear this world out to the ending doom.  
 So, till the judgement that yourself arise,  
 You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

### LVI

Sweet love, renew thy force; be it not said  
 Thy edge should blunter be than appetite,  
 Which but to-day by feeding is allay'd,  
 To-morrow sharpen'd in his former might:  
 So, love, be thou; although to-day thou fill  
 Thy hungry eyes even till they wink with fulness,  
 To-morrow see again, and do not kill  
 The spirit of love with a perpetual dulness.

7 *Nor Mars . . . shall burn*] Cf Ovid's *Metam.*, translated by Golding,  
 bk. xv, *ad fin* :

"Now have I brought a worke to end which neither Ioue's fierce wrath  
*Nor sword nor fire* nor freating age with all the force it hath  
 Are able to abolish quight, etc"

9 *all-oblivious enmity*] enmity which causes oblivion

12 *wear this world out*] Cf *Lear*, IV, vi, 184-185 "This great world  
 Shall so wear out to nought."

13 *So, till . . . yourself arise*] Till the judgment day when you shall arise  
 from the tomb.

LVI This sonnet was omitted from Shakespeare's "Poems" of 1640.

6 *wink*] close, shut. Cf xliii, 1.

## SONNETS

Let this sad interim like the ocean be  
 Which parts the shore, where two contracted new 10  
 Come daily to the banks, that, when they see  
 Return of love, more blest may be the view; 6  
     Or call it winter, which, being full of care,  
     Makes summer's welcome thrice more wish'd, more  
     rare.

### LVII

Being your slave, what should I do but tend  
 Upon the hours and times of your desire?  
 I have no precious time at all to spend,  
 Nor services to do, till you require.  
 Nor dare I chide world-without-end hour  
 Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,  
 Nor think the bitterness of absence sour  
 When you have bid your servant once adieu;  
 Nor dare I question with my jealous thought  
 Where you may be, or your affairs suppose, 10  
 But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought  
 Save, where you are how happy you make those.

10 *two contracted new*] two newly betrothed lovers.

11 *the banks*] the shores.

13 *Or*] Thus Malone. The Quarto reads *As*.

LVII, 5 *world-without-end hour*] the endless or never-ending hour. Cf.

*L. L. L.*, V, ii, 777: "a *world-without-end* bargain."

12 *where you are . . . make those*] how happy you make those where  
 you are.

## SONNETS

So true a fool is love that in your will,  
Though you do any thing, he thinks no ill.

### LVIII

That god forbid that made me first your slave,  
I should in thought control your times of pleasure,  
Or at your hand the account of hours to crave,  
Being your vassal, bound to stay your leisure !  
O, let me suffer, being at your beck,  
The imprison'd absence of your liberty ;  
And patience, tame to sufferance, bide each check,  
Without accusing you of injury.  
Be where you list, your charter is so strong  
That you yourself may privilege your time  
To what you will ; to you it doth belong  
Yourself to pardon of self-doing crime.  
I am to wait, though waiting so be hell,  
Not blame your pleasure, be it ill or well.

10

---

13 *in your will*] whatever your will or pleasure. In the Quarto *will*, although not italicised, is spelt with a capital *W*, as was the usual practice at the time in the case of this and like words in poetry, *e. g.*, Nature, Truth, Wit, Zeal, Soul. A doubtful endeavour has been made to detect in the word here a tame pun on the poet's Christian name, *i. e.*, in case of your Will, or William. See cxxi, 8: "*in their wills*," and cxxxv and cxxxvi *passim* with the notes.

LVIII, 6 *The imprison'd . . . liberty*] The absence which means liberty to you and to me the confinement of a prison.

7 *tame to sufferance*] complaisant in suffering. Cf. *K. John*, IV, ii, 262: "*tame to their obedience*."

9 *charter*] Cf. lxxvii, 3, *infra*.



# SONNETS

## LIX

If there be nothing new, but that which is  
 Hath been before, how are our brains beguiled,  
 Which, labouring for invention, bear amiss  
 The second burthen of a former child!  
 O, that record could with a backward look,  
 Even of five hundred courses of the sun,  
 Show me your image in some antique book,  
 Since mind at first in character was done.  
 That I might see what the old world could say  
 To this composed wonder of your frame;  
 Whether we are mended, or whether better they,  
 Or whether revolution be the same. 10

LIX, 1-4 *If there be nothing . . . former child*] These lines again develop Ovid's philosophy at the close of the *Metam.* Cf. Golding's translation (1612 ed. p. 186 b): "All things do change but nothing sure doth perish . . . The soul is aye the selfsame thing it was . . . Neither doth there perish aught in all the world, but altering takes new shape . . . Things pass perchance from place to place, yet all from whence they came Returning do unpurished continue still the same." See also xv, lxiii, and lxiv, and see cxxiii, 4, and note.

6 *courses of the sun*] years. So *Othello*, III, iv, 71: "The sun to course two hundred compasses," and *Hen. VIII*, II, iii, 5-6: "after So many courses of the sun."

7 *some antique book*] Cf. cvi, 7: "their antique pen"

8 *Since mind . . . was done*] Since thought was first expressed in handwriting.

11 *Whether . . . whether*] The word is here a monosyllable. In the next line it is a dissyllable.

12 *Whether . . . be the same*] whether revolving time produce recurrence of the same effects, whether the present and future be a mere return or reproduction of a past cycle; cf. cxxiii, 4, and note.

## SONNETS

O, sure I am, the wits of former days  
To subjects worse have given admiring praise.

### LX

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,  
So do our minutes hasten to their end;  
Each changing place with that which goes before,  
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.  
Nativity, once in the main of light,  
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,  
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,  
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.  
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth  
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,  
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,

10

LX, 1-4 *Like as the waves do contend*] For another illustration from Ovid's description of Nature's ebb and flow in *Metam*, xv, cf Golding's transl. (ed. 1612, p. 185 b): "As every wave drives others forth and that that comes behind Both thrusteth and is thrust itself; even so the tymes by kind Do flee and follow both at once and evermore renew "

5 *the main of light*] the full expanse of light; so "main" is commonly used of the great expanse of sea. Ovid (*Metam*, xv, Golding's transl., ed. 1612, p. 186 a) describes "Dame Nature" as bringing man out from the womb "[in] to ayre," for him to pass "forth the space of youth," to wear "out his middle age apace," and finally to have his strength "undermined" by age and to be consumed "every whit" by "lingering death "

7 *Crooked*] Malignant, ill-omened.

8 *confound*] destroy.

9 *flourish*] ornament Cf *Hamlet*, II, ii, 91. "outward flourishes "

10 *parallels*] lines. Cf. ii, 2: "dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field," and xix, 9-10 See also *Troil. and Cress*, I, iii, 168

## SONNETS

And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow :  
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,  
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

### LXI

Is it thy will thy image should keep open  
My heavy eyelids to the weary night ?  
Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,  
While shadows like to thee do mock my sight ?  
Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee  
So far from home into my deeds to pry,  
To find out shames and idle hours in me,  
The scope and tenour of thy jealousy ?  
O, no ! thy love, though much, is not so great :  
It is my love that keeps mine eye awake ;  
Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,  
To play the watchman ever for thy sake :  
For thee watch I whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,  
From me far off, with others all too near.

10

### LXII

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye  
And all my soul and all my every part ;  
And for this sin there is no remedy,  
It is so grounded inward in my heart.

---

13 *to times in hope*] to future ages. Cf. Daniel's *Delia*, xxxix, 9-10:

"Thou mayst *in after ages* live esteemed, *Unburied in these lines*"

LXI, 1-4 *Is it thy will . . . my sight?*] The same idea is repeated in xxvii and xliii.

7 *idle hours*] Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, Dedication: "I vow to take advantage of all *idle hours*."

## SONNETS

Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,  
 No shape so true, no truth of such account;  
 And for myself mine own worth do define,  
 As I all other in all worths surmount.  
 But when my glass shows me myself indeed,  
 Beated and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity,  
 Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;  
 Self so self-loving were iniquity.  
     'T is thee, myself, that for myself I praise,  
     Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

10

### LXIII

Against my love shall be, as I am now,  
 With Time's injurious hand crush'd and o'erworn;  
 When hours have drain'd his blood and fill'd his brow  
 With lines and wrinkles; when his youthful morn

LXII, 6 *No shape so true*] Cf. *Lear*, I, ii, 8: "my *shape* as *true*."

9-10 *But when my glass . . . antiquity*] See note on xxii, 1, *supra*.

10 *Beated and chopp'd*] Pared (or rubbed away) and chapped (or wrinkled).

Cf. 2 *Hen. IV*, III, ii, 267: "a little, lean, old, *chapt*, bald shot" (see note there). "Beated" is still used as in the context in provincial dialects.

12 *self-loving were iniquity*] Cf. *All 's Well*, I, i, 136-137: "*self-love* which is the most inhibited sin in the canon."

13 *'T is thee . . . praise*] It is thee who art identical with myself, whom I praise as if I were praising myself.

14 *Painting my age . . . days*] Cf. *L. L. L.*, IV, iii, 240: "*Beauty* doth *varnish* age as if new-born"

LXIII, 1 *Against*] Against that time when; as in xlix, 1-2.

2 *o'erworn*] Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 135. "O'erworn, despised," etc., and *lxiv*, 2: "out-worn."

## SONNETS

Hath travell'd on to age's steepy night,  
 And all those beauties whereof now he's king  
 Are vanishing or vanish'd out of sight,  
 Stealing away the treasure of his spring;  
 For such a time do I now fortify  
 Against confounding age's cruel knife, 10  
 That he shall never cut from memory  
 My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life:  
     His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,  
     And they shall live, and he in them still green.

### LXIV

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced  
 The rich-proud cost of outworn buried age;  
 When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,

5 *age's steepy night*] the steep declining path of old age to the night of death. The phrase is yet another reminiscence of Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metam* bk xv (1612 ed., p 186 a): "Through drooping *age's steepy path* he [*i. e.*, man] runneth out his race" (after passing "forth the space of youth," etc.). Cf. xv, lix, lx, lxiv, cxxiii for other allusions to the same passage in Ovid. "Steepy" is only found elsewhere in Shakespeare in *Tim. of Ath.*, I, i, 78: "the *steepy* mount." "Steepy mountains" is read in the *England's Helicon* version of Marlowe's "Come live with me and be my love" (line 4), the *Pas Pilgrim* version reads "*craggy* mountains" (xx, 4).

9-10 *I now fortify*      *cruel knife*] Cf. Daniel's *Delia*, Sonnet 1 "These are the arks the trophies I erect That *fortify* thy name *against* old age" Cf. for "fortify" xvi, 3, *supra*

13 *black lines*] Cf. lxv, 14: "black ink"

LXIV, 2 *rich-proud cost . . . age*] the costly and proud splendour of the dead and buried past Cf. *Lucrece*, 1350 "the *worn-out age*," and *supra*, lxiii, 2: "*o'erworn*." See also lxviii, 1 "*days outworn*."

## SONNETS

And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;  
 When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
 Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,  
 And the firm soil win of the watery main,  
 Increasing store with loss and loss with store;  
 When I have seen such interchange of state,  
 Or state itself confounded to decay; 10  
 Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare,  
 That Time will come and take my love away.  
     This thought is as a death, which cannot choose  
     But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

### LXV

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,  
 But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,  
 How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,  
 Whose action is no stronger than a flower?  
 O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out  
 Against the wreckful siege of battering days,

5-10 *When I have seen . . . to decay*] Such revolution of nature, as the encroachment of land and sea one upon the other, is again noticed in 2 *Hen. IV.*, III, i, 45-51. The illustration is one more of Shakespeare's many echoes in the sonnets of the philosophic disquisition in Ovid's *Metam.*, xv (cf. Golding's transl., 1612 ed., p. 186 b):

"Even so haue places often-times *exchanged their estate*,  
 For *I have seene* it sea which was substantiall ground alate  
 Againe where sea was, *I have seene* the same become dry land."

Cf. cxxiii, 4, *infra*, and note.

13-14 *This thought . . . weep to have*] "Thought" is the subject of the relative "which"; "weep to have" means "weep at having."

## SONNETS

When rocks impregnable are not so stout,  
 Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?  
 O fearful meditation! where, alack,  
 Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid? 10  
 Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?  
 Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?  
     O, none, unless this miracle have might,  
     That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

### LXVI

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,  
 As, to behold desert a beggar born,  
 And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,  
 And purest faith unhappily forsworn,  
 And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,  
 And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,  
 And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,  
 And strength by limping sway disabled,  
 And art made tongue-tied by authority,  
 And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill, 10  
 And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,  
 And captive good attending captain ill:

LXV, 10 *Time's best jewel . . . chest*] The best jewel that ever came from Time's chest. Cf. lii, 8-9, *supra*: "So is *the time* that keeps you as my *chest*," etc.

14 *black ink*] Cf. lxiii, 18: "black lines."

LXVI For the pessimistic sentiment see note on xxix, *supra*. Cf. *Lucrece*, 902-912, and *Hamlet*, III, i, 70-74.

1 *with all these*] with all the ills which follow.

11 *simplicity*] folly, stupidity.

## SONNETS

Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,  
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

### LXVII

Ah, wherefore with infection should he live  
And with his presence grace impiety,  
That sin by him advantage should achieve  
And lace itself with his society?  
Why should false painting imitate his cheek,  
And steal dead seeing of his living hue?  
Why should poor beauty indirectly seek  
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true?  
Why should he live, now Nature bankrupt is,  
Beggar'd of blood to blush through lively veins? 10  
For she hath no exchequer now but his,  
And, proud of many, lives upon his gains.  
O, him she stores, to show what wealth she had  
In days long since, before these last so bad.

### LXVIII

Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn,  
When beauty lived and died as flowers do now,

- LXVII Cf. cxxvii, *infra*, for a like lament on the degeneracy of the age  
4 *lace itself*] adorn or ornament itself; no uncommon usage.  
6 *dead seeing*] a lifeless semblance or aspect of beauty *Seeing* may be  
right, but *seeming*, i. e., appearance, is substituted by Capell.  
7 *poor beauty indirectly seek*] defective beauty falsely or wrongfully seek.  
LXVIII, 1 *map of days outworn*] picture of the past So *Lucrece*, 402:  
"map of death," and 1350: "*pattern of the worn-out age*." Cf.  
lxiv, 2, *supra*, and note.



## SONNETS

Before these bastard signs of fair were born,  
 Or durst inhabit on a living brow;  
 Before the golden tresses of the dead,  
 The right of sepulchres, were shorn away,  
 To live a second life on second head;  
 Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay:  
 In him those holy antique hours are seen,  
 Without all ornament, itself and true,  
 Making no summer of another's green,  
 Robbing no old to dress his beauty new;  
     And him as for a map doth Nature store,  
     To show false Art what beauty was of yore.

10

### LXIX

Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth view  
 Want nothing that the thought of hearts can mend;  
 All tongues, the voice of souls, give thee that due,

3 *fair*] beauty. For the substantive use cf. *Com. of Errors*, II, i, 98; xvi, 11, *supra*; and lxxxiii, 2, *infra*.

5-7 *Before the golden tresses . . . second head*] Shakespeare repeatedly denounces the practice of wearing false hair which was often shorn off the scalps of the dead. Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, III, ii, 95-96: "the dowry of a *second head*, The skull that bred them in the sepulchre." So also *L. L. L.*, IV, iii, 255 and *Hen. V.*, III, vii, 60. The practice is fully exposed in Stubbe's *Anatomie of Abuses* (New Shaksp. Soc., I, 68, 258). The satirist Goddard in his *Satirycall Dialogue* (1615, sig. 13 b) deprecates "the curl'd worne *tresses of dead borrowed haire*."

13-14 *And him . . . was of yore*] a variation on the concluding couplet of Sonnet lxvii.

LXIX, 2-3 *the thought of hearts . . . tongues, the voice of souls*] Twice in

## SONNETS

Uttering bare truth, even so as foes commend.  
 Thy outward thus with outward praise is crown'd;  
 But those same tongues, that give thee so thine own,  
 In other accents do this praise confound  
 By seeing farther than the eye hath shown.  
 They look into the beauty of thy mind,  
 And that, in guess, they measure by thy deeds;                    10  
 Then, churls, their thoughts, although their eyes were  
       kind,  
 To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds:  
       But why thy odour matcheth not thy show,  
       The soil is this, that thou dost common grow.

### LXX

That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect,  
 For slander's mark was ever yet the fair;

his early work, *Venus and Adonis*, 367, and *Tit. Andr.*, III, i, 82, Shakespeare gives the tongue a cognate designation: "the engine of (her) thoughts"

*that due*] Malone's just correction of the original reading *that end*

5 *Thy outward*] Thy external shape.

12 *To thy fair flower . . . of weeds*] Cf. xciv, 14, *infra*: "Lilies that fester  
*smell* far worse than *weeds*," and note.

14 *soul*] defect or blemish. The Cambridge editors' correction of the original reading *solye*, which is altered to *soyle* in the "Poems" of 1640. Malone read *solve*, i. e., solution. "Soil" as a verb is occasionally found in much the same sense as "solve" and might possibly, but not probably, be used here for "solution or explanation"

LXX, 2 *slander's mark . . . fair*] Cf. Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, Sestiad I, 285-286: "Whose name is it, if she be false or not, So she be *fair*, but some vile tongues will blot?"

## SONNETS

The ornament of beauty is suspect,  
A crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air.  
So thou be good, slander doth but approve  
Thy worth the greater, being woo'd of time;  
For canker vice the sweetest buds doth love,  
And thou present'st a pure unstained prime.  
Thou hast pass'd by the ambush of young days,  
Either not assail'd, or victor being charged;  
Yet this thy praise cannot be so thy praise,  
To tie up envy evermore enlarged:  
If some suspect of ill mask'd not thy show,  
Then thou alone kingdoms of hearts shouldst owe.

## LXXI

No longer mourn for me when I am dead  
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell  
Give warning to the world that I am fled  
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:  
Nay, if you read this line, remember not  
The hand that writ it; for I love you so,  
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,  
If thinking on me then should make you woe.

3 *suspect*] suspicion; so line 13, *infra*.

6 *being woo'd of time*] being wooed by the temptations either of the season of youth or of the present age.

7 For canker vice . . . doth love] So *Venus and Adonis*, 656: "This canker that eats up Love's tender spring"; and *Two Gent.*, I, i, 42-44: "Yet writers say, as in the sweetest bud, The eating canker dwells, so eating love Inhabits in the finest wits of all." Cf. xxxv, 4, *supra*: "Loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud."

LXXI, 2 *surly sullen bell*] Cf. 2 *Hen. IV*, I, i, 102: "a sullen bell . . . tolling a departed friend."

## SONNETS

O, if, I say, you look upon this verse  
 When I perhaps compounded am with clay, 10  
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,  
 But let your love even with my life decay;  
     Lest the wise world should look into your moan,  
     And mock you with me after I am gone.

### LXXII

O, lest the world should task you to recite  
 What merit lived in me, that you should love  
 After my death, dear love, forget me quite,  
 For you in me can nothing worthy prove;  
 Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,  
 To do more for me than mine own desert,  
 And hang more praise upon deceased I  
 Than niggard truth would willingly impart:  
 O, lest your true love may seem false in this, 10  
 That you for love speak well of me untrue,  
 My name be buried where my body is,  
 And live no more to shame nor me nor you.  
     For I am shamed by that which I bring forth,  
     And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

10 *compounded . . . with clay*] Cf 2 *Hen. IV*, IV, v, 116. "*compound me with forgotten dust.*"

LXXII, 5 *some virtuous lie*] Webster in the *Duchess of Malfi*, III, ii, 219, assigns to Tasso the familiar phrase "*magnanima menzogna*" (*Gierusalemme Liberata*, Bk. II, Canto 22) which Fairfax translates "a noble lie." Tasso's phrase, which became proverbial, is related to the γοργαῖον ψεῦδος of Plato and the "*splendide mendax*" of Horace.

## SONNETS

### • LXXIII

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
 Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang:  
 In me thou see'st the twilight of such day  
 As after sunset fadeth in the west;  
 Which by and by black night doth take away,  
 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.  
 In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,  
 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
 As the death-bed whereon it must expire,  
 Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.

10

This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more  
 strong,

To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

LXXIII, 1-3 *That time of year . . . the cold*] See note on xxii, 1, *supra*. The same figure of a tree stript bare is applied to old age in *Cymb.*, III, iii, 60-64, and *Tim. of Ath.*, IV, iii, 263 *seq.* Cf. *Macb.*, V, iii, 22-23: "my way of life Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf"

7 *Which . . . take away*] Cf. *Two Gent.*, I, iii, 85-87: "day Which now shows all the beauty of the sun And by and by a cloud takes all away."

8 *Death's second self*] Cf. Daniel's *Delia*, Sonnet xlix, which describes "sleep" as "son of the sable night," and "brother to death." Homer and Hesiod both call sleep the "brother of death." The phrase is used by Ronsard and De Baif. Daniel and other Elizabethan poets were well acquainted with Desportes' apostrophes of sleep; see *Amours d'Hippolyte*, lxxv, 12: "O frère de la mort"; and *Prière au Sommeil* (in *Diane*, bk. i): "Fils de la Nuit et de la Silence."

## SONNETS

### LXXIV

But be contented: when that fell arrest  
 Without all bail shall carry me away,  
 My life hath in this line some interest,  
 Which for memorial still with thee shall stay.  
 When thou reviewest this, thou dost review  
 The very part was consecrate to thee:  
 The earth can have but earth, which is his due;  
 My spirit is thine, the better part of me:  
 So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,  
 The prey of worms, my body being dead;  
 The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,  
 Too base of thee to be remembered.  
     The worth of that is that which it contains,  
     And that is this, and this with thee remains.

16

### LXXV

So are you to my thoughts as food to life,  
 Or as sweet-season'd showers are to the ground;

---

LXXIV, 1-2 *fell arrest . . . away*] Cf *Hamlet*, V, ii, 328-329. "this *fell* sergeant death Is *strict* in his *arrest*" "Arrest without all [*i e*, any] bail" is the legal term for summary arrest

8 *the better part of me*] See xxxix, 2, *supra*

11 *a wretch's knife*] another conventional reference to the destroying activity of the wretch Time Cf lxiii, 10 "confounding age's cruel *knife*," and c, 14, "[time's] crooked *knife*" Time is denounced as "this *bloody* tyrant" xvi, 2

13-14 *The worth of that . . . remains*] The worth of the body lies in the soul which it holds, and this verse which enshrines my soul remains with thee. Cf xxxix, 13-14.

LXXV This sonnet was omitted from Shakespeare's "Poems" of 1640

## SONNETS

And for the peace of you I hold such strife  
 As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found;  
 Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon  
 Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure;  
 Now counting best to be with you alone,  
 Then better'd that the world may see my pleasure:  
 Sometime all full with feasting on your sight,  
 And by and by clean starved for a look; 10  
 Possessing or pursuing no delight,  
 Save what is had or must from you be took.  
     Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,  
     Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

### LXXVI

Why is my verse so barren of new pride,  
 So far from variation or quick change?  
 Why with the time do I not glance aside  
 To new-found methods and to compounds strange?  
 Why write I still all one, ever the same,

3 *for the peace of you*] in order to enjoy the peace which your love affords.

10 *starved for a look*] Cf. xlvii, 3, *supra*: "famish'd for a look," and note.

13 *pine and surfeit*] Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 602: "*surfeit* by the eye and *pine* the maw."

14 *Or gluttoning . . . all away*] Either I have every opportunity of gluttoning or all food is inaccessible.

LXXVI This sonnet was omitted from Shakespeare's "Poems" of 1640.

3-4 *Why with the time . . . strange*] Cf. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnet iii: "Let dainty wits cry on the Sisters nine . . . Ennobling *new-found* tropes with problems old, Or with *strange similes* enrich each line." Cf. for like comment by Shakespeare on contemporary sonneteers' extravagances xxi and xxxviii 10, *supra*, and cxxx, *infra*.

## SONNETS

And keep invention in a noted weed,  
 That every word doth almost tell my name,  
 Showing their birth and where they did proceed?  
 O, know, sweet love, I always write of you,  
 And you and love are still my argument;  
 So all my best is dressing old words new,  
 Spending again what is already spent:  
 For as the sun is daily new and old,  
 So is my love still telling what is told.

10

### LXXVII

Thy glass will show thee how thy beauties wear,  
 Thy dial how thy precious minutes waste;  
 The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will bear,  
 And of this book this learning mayst thou taste.  
 The wrinkles which thy glass will truly show  
 Of mouthed graves will give thee memory;

6 *in a noted weed*] in a familiar garb; in the conventional shape.

9-10 *O, know, sweet love . . . still my argument*] Cf. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnet xc: "For nothing from my will or wit doth flow Since all my words thy beauty doth indite." For "argument" [*i. e.*, theme] cf. xxxviii, 3 and lxxix, 5.

LXXVII, 3 *The vacant leaves . . . will bear*] The sonnet possibly accompanied the gift of a memorandum book Cf line 10, *infra*: "these waste blanks," and cxxii, 1, *infra*. The friend is bidden record his sentiments on the blank paper; perusal of his notes hereafter will tell him of the change or progress of his feelings.

4 *this learning*] *sc.* of the progress of Time's decay

6 *mouthed graves*] gaping or yawning graves Cf 1 *Hen. IV*, I, iii, 97: "mouthed wounds", *Venus and Adonis*, 757: "a swallowing grave"; and *Hamlet*, III, ii, 379. "churchyards yawn "



## SONNETS

Thou by thy dial's shady stealth mayst know  
 Time's thievish progress to eternity.  
 Look, what thy memory cannot contain  
 Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find      10  
 Those children nursed, deliver'd from thy brain,  
 To take a new acquaintance of thy mind.  
     These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,  
     Shall profit thee and much enrich thy book.

### LXXVIII

So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse  
 And found such fair assistance in my verse  
 As every alien pen hath got my use  
 And under thee their poesy disperse.

7 *thy dial's shady stealth*] Cf. civ, 9-10, *infra*: "Ah! yet doth beauty, like  
 a dial-hand steal," etc.

10 *blanks*] Theobald's admirable emendation of the original *blacks*.

LXXVIII, 3-4 *every alien pen . . . disperse*] The poet begins to complain  
 that his friend's patronage is sought by other poets. This theme  
 is continued for the most part to the close of *Sonnet lxxxvi*. In *Sonnet*  
*lxxxii* the poet refers to the extravagant eulogy of the "dedicated words  
 which writers use" in addressing his friend. There seems small  
 doubt that Shakespeare has in mind the dedicatory sonnets and ad-  
 dresses inscribed in 1594 and succeeding years to his own patron, the  
 Earl of Southampton, who was in Nashe's phrase "a dear lover and  
 cherisher" of poets. Among the earl's poetic eulogists were, besides  
 Nashe, Barnabe Barnes, Gervase Markham, John Florio, Samuel  
 Daniel, John Davies, George Chapman, and many others. All these  
 panegyrists of Southampton exhausted in his honour the vocabulary  
 of praise, mainly in sonnets, and one or other of them is doubtless  
 referred to in these sonnets of Shakespeare, though there is room for  
 doubt as to the precise individuality of Shakespeare's chief rival

3 *got my use*] acquired my habit (of writing poems to you).

## SONNETS

Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing  
 And heavy ignorance aloft to fly, •  
 Have added feathers to the learned's wing  
 And given grace a double majesty.  
 Yet be most proud of that which I compile,  
 Whose influence is thine and born of thee:  
 In others' works thou dost but mend the style,  
 And arts with thy sweet graces graced be;  
     But thou art all my art, and dost advance  
     As high as learning my rude ignorance.

10

### LXXIX

Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid,  
 My verse alone had all thy gentle grace;  
 But now my gracious numbers are decay'd,  
 And my sick Muse doth give another place.  
 I grant, sweet love, thy lovely argument  
 Deserves the travail of a worthier pen;  
 Yet what of thee thy poet doth invent

---

5-6 *Thine eyes . . . aloft to fly*] A reference to the poet himself. Cf line 14, *infra*: "my rude ignorance" For similar imagery cf. Spenser's sonnet to the Earl of Essex (*Faerie Queene*, 1590). "My Muse whose *fethers* nothing flitt, Doe yet but flagg and lowly learne to *fly*, *With bolder wing* shall dare *aloft* to sty [*i e.*, to find abode]." See also Ovid's *Metam.*, xv (Golding's transl., 1612 ed., p. 185 a): "I minde . . . up among the starres to sty . . . and in the cloudes to *flye*"

7-8 *Have added feathers . . . double majesty*] A somewhat inflated compliment to the rival poet, whom the patron has honoured with his patronage.

9 *compile*] compose, write. Cf lxxxv, 2, *supra*

LXXIX, 5 *thy lovely argument*] the theme of thy loveliness; cf. xxviii, 3, *supra*.

## SONNETS

He robs thee of, and pays it thee again.  
 He lends thee virtue, and he stole that word  
 From thy behaviour; beauty doth he give, 10  
 And found it in thy cheek: he can afford  
 No praise to thee but what in thee doth live.  
 Then thank him not for that which he doth say,  
 Since what he owes thee thou thyself dost pay.

### LXXX

O, how I faint when I of you do write,  
 Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,  
 And in the praise thereof spends all his might,  
 To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame!  
 But since your worth, wide as the ocean is,  
 The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,  
 My saucy bark, inferior far to his,  
 On your broad main doth wilfully appear.  
 Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,  
 Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride; 10  
 Or, being wreck'd, I am a worthless boat,  
 He of tall building and of goodly pride:  
 Then if he thrive and I be cast away,  
 The worst was this; my love was my decay.

---

LXXX, 2 *a better spirit*] a rival poet panegyrising the object of Shakespeare's addresses Cf. cxliv, 3-4. "The *better* angel . . . The *worser spirit*," and note

4 *tongue-tied*] See lxxxv, 1, and note.

7 *My saucy bark*] The image is frequent in the sonneteers. Cf. Barnes' *Parthenophil*, xci: "My fancy's ship . . . my thought's swift pinnace," and Lodge's *Phyllis*, xi: "My frail and earthly bark, . . . my brittle boat" The nautical figure is pursued, lxxxvi, 1-2, *infra*.

13 *cast away*] wrecked, a common usage.

## SONNETS

### LXXXI

Or I shall live your epitaph to make,  
 Or you survive when I in earth am rotten;  
 From hence your memory death cannot take,  
 Although in me each part will be forgotten.  
 Your name from hence immortal life shall have,  
 Though I, once gone, to all the world must die:  
 The earth can yield me but a common grave,  
 When you entombed in men's eyes shall lie.  
 Your monument shall be my gentle verse,  
 Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;  
 And tongues to be your being shall rehearse,  
 When all the breathers of this world are dead;  
     You still shall live — such virtue hath my pen —  
     Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths  
     of men.

10

### LXXXII

I grant thou wert not married to my Muse,  
 And therefore mayst without attaint o'erlook  
 The dedicated words which writers use  
 Of their fair subject, blessing every book.

LXXXI, 9 *Your monument . . . verse*] Cf. Daniel's *Delia*, xxxvii, 9: "This  
 [sc. my verse] shall remain thy lasting monument "

12 *breathers*] Cf. *As you like it*, III, ii, 263: "I will chide no *breather*  
 in the world "

14 *in the mouths of men*] Cf. the Latin phrase (from Ennius): "Volito vivu'  
 per ora virum," to which Shakespeare had already made allusion in  
*Tit. Andr.*, I, i, 389-390. See note there

LXXXII, 2 *attaint*] reproach, disgrace, impeachment

3-4 *The dedicated words . . . blessing every book*] See note on lxxviii, 3-4,  
*supra*. Cf. Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller or Adventures of*  
*Jack Wilton* (1594), Dedication to Southampton: "Incomprehensible

## SONNETS

Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue,  
Finding thy worth a limit past my praise;  
And therefore art enforced to seek anew  
Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days.  
And do so, love; yet when they have devised  
What strained touches rhetoric can lend,  
Thou truly fair wert truly sympathized  
In true plain words by thy true-telling friend;  
And their gross painting might be better used  
Where cheeks need blood; in thee it is abused.

## LXXIII

I never saw that you did painting need,  
And therefore to your fair no painting set;

is the height of your spirit both in heroical resolution and matters of conceit. Vnrepuieably perisheth that booke whatsoeuer to wast paper, which on the diamond rocke of your iudgement disasterly chanceth to be shipwrackt." Elsewhere Nashe calls Southampton "the matchless image of honour and magnificent rewarder of vertue, Jove's eagle-borne Ganimede" For other "strange touches" of "rhetoric devised" in Southampton's honour, see Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, Appendix IV.

8 time-bettering days] Cf xxxii, 10, *supra*: "the bettering of the time."

11 *truly sympathized*] described with perfect fidelity. So *Lucrece*, 1113,  
and *L. L. L.*, III, i, 46

13-14 *better used . . . it is abused*] Cf. *L. L. L.*, II, iii, 225-226, where "better used" again rhymes with "t is abused"; see, too, cxxxiv, 10-12.

LXXXIII, 1-2 *painting . . . painting*] The word and thought continues the reference to "gross painting," i. e., "extravagant compliment," in lxxxii, 13. Constable frequently uses the phrase "*paint in verse*" for "describe in poetry." Cf. *Diana*, Decade II, Sonnet 1, and Decade IV, Sonnet i (ed. Hazlitt, p 15), where the correct reading of line 2 is "In vain my wit doth *paint in verse* my woe"

2 *fair*] beauty Cf. xvi, 11, lxviii, 3, *supra*, and *Com. of Errors*, II, i, 98.

## SONNETS

I found, or thought I found, you did exceed  
 The barren tender of a poet's debt:  
 And therefore have I slept in your report,  
 That you yourself, being extant, well might show  
 How far a modern quill doth come too short,  
 Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow.  
 This silence for my sin you did impute,  
 Which shall be most my glory, being dumb;  
 For I impair not beauty being mute,  
 When others would give life and bring a tomb.  
     There lives more life in one of your fair eyes  
     Than both your poets can in praise devise.

10

### LXXXIV

Who is it that says most? which can say more  
 Than this rich praise, that you alone are you?  
 In whose confine immured is the store  
 Which should example where your equal grew.

5 *slept in your report*] abstained from making report or eulogy of you.

7 *modern*] ordinary, commonplace.

12 *a tomb*] Cf. xvii, 3: "it [my verse] is but as *a tomb* Which hides your life "

14 *both your poets*] apparently Shakespeare and the other poet, who has abandoned himself to reckless panegyric of their common patron Of Southampton's poetic protégés, Barnes makes the most marked reference to the noble patron's "fair eyes", see his sonnet (dedicatory to *Parthenophil*, 1593). "gracious (*i e*, lovely) eyes, Those heavenly lamps which give the Muses light, Which give and take in course that holy fire."

LXXXIV, 3-4 *the store . . . equal grew*] the treasury which should provide copies or examples of yourself of worth equal to the original The idea is, as in *Sonnets* i-xvii, drawn from the peculiar obligation of begetting heirs imposed on men of exceptional charm For "store" cf. xiv, 12, *supra*.

## SONNETS

Lean penury within that pen doth dwell  
That to his subject lends not some small glory;  
But he that writes of you, if he can tell  
That you are you, so dignifies his story.  
Let him but copy what in you is writ,  
Not making worse what nature made so clear,  
And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,  
Making his style admired every where.  
You to your beauteous blessings add a curse,  
Being fond on praise, which makes your praises  
worse.

LXXXV

My tongue-tied Muse in manners holds her still,  
While comments of your praise, richly compiled,

- 5-6 *Lean penury . . . small glory*] The pen or book lends some glory to its subject. For the converse sentiment that the glory of the subject communicates itself to the pen or book, cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, iii, 92-93: "That book in many's eyes doth share the glory That in gold clasps locks in the golden story." See, too, ciii, 1-2, *infra*.
- 11 *fame*] confer fame on. The word is rarely found as a verb, so "famoused" (xxv, 9) is used adjectivally.
- 14 *Being fond . . . praises worse*] Being fond of such panegyric as debases what is praiseworthy in you instead of exalting it.
- LXXXV, 1 *My tongue-tied Muse*] The numbing effect of a patron's eminent virtues on a modest poet is a common conceit among Elizabethan poets. Cf. Campion to Lord Walden whose "admired virtues" "Bred such despairing to my daunted muse That it could scarcely utter naked truth." "In manners holds her still" means "keeps a respectful silence." Cf. xxxix, 1.
- 2 *comments . . . compiled*] eulogies composed or described in fine language. Cf. lxxviii, 9, *supra*. Barnfield in his *Cassandra* (1595) writes of his heroine's lover that "his tongue compiles her praise."

## SONNETS

Reserve their character with golden quill,  
 And precious phrase by all the Muses filed.  
 I think good thoughts, whilst other write good words,  
 And, like unletter'd clerk, still cry "Amen"  
 To every hymn that able spirit affords,  
 In polish'd form of well refined pen.  
 Hearing you praised, I say "'T is so, 't is true,"  
 And to the most of praise add something more; 10  
 But that is in my thought, whose love to you,  
 Though words come hindmost, holds his rank before.  
 Then others for the breath of words respect,  
 Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect,

### LXXXVI

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,  
 Bound for the prize of all too precious you,  
 That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,  
 Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?

3 *Reserve . . . quill*] Preserve or perpetuate the handwriting by executing it with a golden quill For "reserve" cf. xxxii, 7, *supra*. "*Reserve* them for my love"

4 *filed*] polished, refined. Barnfield in his *Cassandra* uses this epithet ("her *filed* tongue") as here in near association with "compiled" (line 2). See *L. L. L.*, V, i, 9. "his tongue *filed*."

LXXXVI A compliment to the rival poet, and the main argument in favour of his identification with George Chapman; but Chapman's poetic style, though very involved, cannot be credited with exceptional dignity. Shakespeare's words will not bear too literal an interpretation.

4 *Making their tomb . . . grew*] Cf. *Rom and Jul*, II, iii, 9-10. "The earth that 's nature's mother, is her *tomb*; What is her burying grave, that is her *womb*."



## SONNETS

Was it his spirit, thy spirits taught to write  
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?  
No, neither he, nor his compeers by night  
Giving him aid, my verse astonished.  
He, nor that affable familiar ghost  
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,  
As victors, of my silence cannot boast;  
I was not sick of any fear from thence:

But when your countenance fill'd up his line,  
Then lack'd I matter; that enfeebled mine.

LXXXVII

Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing,  
And like enough thou know'st thy estimate:

7-10 *his compeers . . . intelligence*] The aid rendered poets by “nightly familiars” is noticed by Chapman in his poem, *The Shadow of Night* (1594). Nashe gives at the same date a more general description of the workings of “nightly familiars” in his prose tract *The Terrors of the Night* (1594).

8 *my verse astonished*] stunned with terror or struck dumb *my verse*, cf.  
lxxxv, 1. See *Lucrece*, 1730-1731: "Stone-still, *astonish'd* . . .  
Stood Collatine "

LXXXVII, 1 *possessing*] The present participle, which ends no less than ten lines of this sonnet, is frequently found in the same place in early Elizabethan sonnets. Cf. Daniel, *Sonnets after Astrophel*, 1591, No. xxiv, where eight lines end similarly, i. e., "paining," "crying," "waining," "trying," "aspiring," "desiring," "mourning," "burning." A like number of present participles end lines in Watson's *Tears of Fancie*, xxviii; Constable and Barnes show similar predilection for rhymes in "-ing."

## SONNETS

The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;  
 My bonds in thee are all determinate.  
 For how do I hold thee but by thy granting?  
 And for that riches where is my deserving?  
 The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,  
 And so my patent back again is swerving.  
 Thyself thou gavest, thy own worth then not knowing,  
 Or me, to whom thou gavest it, else mistaking; 10  
 So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,  
 Comes home again, on better judgement making.  
 Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter,  
 In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.

### LXXXVIII

When thou shalt be disposed to set me light,  
And place my merit in the eye of scorn,

- 3-4 *The charter . . . all determinate*] For like legal terminology see Barnes' *Parthenophil* (1593), Sonnet xv "I shall resign Thy love's large charter and thy bonds again" Cf. lviii, 9, *supra*, and cxxxiv, *infra* "Determinate" is a legal term for "ended" or "expired"
- 6 *riches*] singular noun, like the French *richesse*, *i. e.*, wealth. The usage is frequent.
- 8 *my patent*] my monopoly or privilege; so Daniel uses "privilege" in *Sonnets after Astrophel*, 1591, No xviii.
- 11 *upon misprision growing*] the outcome of error; so *L. I. L.*, IV, iii, 94, and *Muds N Dr*, III, ii, 90.
- 13-14 *as a dream doth flatter, In sleep a king*] So *Rom and Jul*, V, i, 1-9: "If I may trust the flattering truth of sleep . . . I dreamt . . . That I . . . was an emperor."
- 14 *no such matter*] nothing of the sort Cf *Tw Night*, III, i, 4-5 "VIOLA Art thou a churchman? CLOWN No such matter, sir"
- LXXXVIII, 1 *to set me light*] to underrate me, to despise me. Cf. *Rich. II*, I, iii, 293: "The man . . . sets it [*i. e.*, sorrow] light."

## SONNETS

Upon thy side against myself I'll fight,  
 And prove thee virtuous, though thou art forsworn.  
 With mine own weakness being best acquainted,  
 Upon thy part I can set down a story  
 Of faults conceal'd, wherein I am attainted;  
 That thou in losing me shalt win much glory:  
 And I by this will be a gainer too;  
 For bending all my loving thoughts on thee, 10  
 The injuries that to myself I do,  
 Doing thee vantage, double-vantage me.  
     Such is my love, to thee I so belong,  
     That for thy right myself will bear all wrong.

### LXXXIX

Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault,  
 And I will comment upon that offence:  
 Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt,  
 Against thy reasons making no defence.  
 Thou canst not, love, disgrace me half so ill,  
 To set a form upon desired change,  
 As I'll myself disgrace; knowing thy will,  
 I will acquaintance strangle and look strange;

6 *Upon thy part*] In support of your view of the case; so xlix, 12. Cf. *Hamlet*, III, i, 123: "but yet I could accuse me of such things."

LXXXIX, 3 *Speak of my lameness . . . halt*] A figurative illustration.  
 Cf. xxxvii, 3, *supra*.

6-7 *To set a form . . . disgrace*] As to set up a pretext, which I shall discredit, for the change or alienation you desire in me.

8 *strangle . . . strange*] put an end to, and assume a distant expression.  
 Cf. *Tw Night*, V, i, 141: "*strangle* thy propriety", *Com. of Errors*, V, i, 295. "Why *look* you *strange* on me?"

## SONNETS

Be absent from thy walks; and in my tongue  
 Thy sweet beloved name no more\*shall dwell, 10  
 Lest I, too much profane, should do it wrong,  
 And haply of our old acquaintance tell.

For thee, against myself I'll vow debate,  
 For I must ne'er love him whom thou dost hate.

### XC

Then hate me when thou wilt; if ever, now;  
 Now, while the world is bent my deeds to cross,  
 Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,  
 And do not drop in for an after-loss:  
 Ah, do not, when my heart hath 'scaped this sorrow,  
 Come in the rearward of a conquer'd woe;  
 Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,  
 To linger out a purposed overthrow.  
 If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,  
 When other petty griefs have done their spite, 10  
 But in the onset come: so shall I taste  
 At first the very worst of fortune's might;  
     And other strains of woe, which now seem woe,  
     Compared with loss of thee will not seem so.

---

9 *thy walks*] thy haunts.

13 *against myself . . . debate*] I'll declare war on myself. So xxxv, 11, xlix, 11, and cxlix, 2

xc, 6 *in the rearward of*] behind, at the end of. Cf. *Much Ado*, IV, i, 126·  
 "on the rearward of reproaches"

7 *Give not . . . morrow*] Shakespeare frequently refers to rain as the ordinary sequel of wind. Cf. *Lucrece*, 1788-1790, and note there

13 *other strains of woe*] Cf. *Much Ado*, V, i, 11-12: "*Measure has woe the length and breadth of mine, And let it answer every strain for strain.*"

## SONNETS

### XC I

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,  
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force;  
Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill;  
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse;  
And every humour hath his adjunct pleasure,  
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest:  
But these particulars are not my measure;  
All these I better in one general best.  
Thy love is better than high birth to me,  
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost, 10  
Of more delight than hawks or horses be;  
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast:  
    Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take  
    All this away and me most wretched make.

### XCII

But do thy worst to steal thyself away,  
For term of life thou art assured mine;  
And life no longer than thy love will stay,  
For it depends upon that love of thine.  
Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,  
When in the least of them my life hath end.  
I see a better state to me belongs  
Than that which on thy humour doth depend:

XC I, 10 *Richer than wealth . . . cost*] Cf. *Cymb.*, III, iii, 23-24: "*Richer than doing nothing for a bauble, Prouder than rustling in unpaid-for silk.*"

## SONNETS

Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,  
 Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie. 10  
 O, what a happy title do I find,  
 Happy to have thy love, happy to die!  
 But what 's so blessed-fair that fears no blot?  
 Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not.

### XCIII

So shall I live, supposing thou art true,  
 Like a deceived husband; so love's face  
 May still seem love to me, though alter'd new;  
 Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place:  
 For there can live no hatred in thine eye,  
 Therefore in that I cannot know thy change.  
 In many's looks the false heart's history  
 Is writ in moods and frowns and wrinkles strange,  
 But heaven in thy creation did decree  
 That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell; 10  
 Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings be,  
 Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness tell.  
 How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,  
 If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show!

XCII, 10, *Since that my life . . . doth lie*] Seeing that any change in thy devotion will mean death to me.

XCIII, 7-8 *In many's looks . . . wrinkles strange*] Cf. *Lucrece*, 1396: "The face of either ciphered either's heart," and *Mach.*, I, iv, 11-12: "There's no art To find the mind's construction in the face."

14 *show*] external appearance. Cf. *liv*, 9, *supra*; "their *virtue* only is their *show*."

## SONNETS

### XCIV

They that have power to hurt and will do none,  
 That do not do the thing they most do show,  
 Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,  
 Unmoved, cold and to temptation slow;  
 They rightly do inherit heaven's graces  
 And husband nature's riches from expense;  
 They are the lords and owners of their faces,  
 Others but stewards of their excellence.  
 The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,  
 Though to itself it only live and die,  
 But if that flower with base infection meet,  
 The basest weed outbraves his dignity:  
     For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;  
     Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

10

### XCV

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame  
 Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,  
 Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!  
 O, in what sweets dost thou thy sins inclose!  
 That tongue that tells the story of thy days,  
 Making lascivious comments on thy sport,

---

xciv, 7 *They are the lords . . . [aces]* They are absolute masters of themselves in all respects. Cf. *K. John*, I, i, 137: "*Lord of thy presence.*"

10 *to itself . . . die*] Cf. liv, 11, *supra*: "[Roses] *Die to themselves.*"

14 *Lilies . . . than weeds*] Cf. lxix, 12, *supra* This line appears in the tragedy of *Edward III* (before 1595), II, i, 451; see xxxiii, 2, *supra*, and cxlii, 6, *infra*, for other echoes of the same play.

xcv, 2 *like a canker*] for the imagery see xxxv, 4, and lxx, 7, *supra*.

## SONNETS

Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise;

Naming thy name blesses an ill report.

O, what a mansion have those vices got

• Which for their habitation chose out thee, 10

Where beauty's veil doth cover every blot

And all things turn to fair that eyes can see!

Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege;

The hardest knife ill used doth lose his edge.

### XCVI

Some say, thy fault is youth, some wantonness;

• Some say, thy grace is youth and gentle sport;

Both grace and faults are loved of more and less:

Thou makest faults graces that to thee resort.

As on the finger of a throned queen

The basest jewel will be well esteem'd,

So are those errors that in thee are seen

To truths translated and for true things deem'd.

How many lambs might the stern wolf betray,

If like a lamb he could his looks translate! 10

How many gazers mightst thou lead away,

If thou wouldst use the strength of all thy state!

12 *And all things . . . see*] Cf. xl, 13, *supra*: "Lascivious grace, in whom  
all ill well shows "

xcvi This sonnet was omitted from Shakespeare's "Poems" of 1640

3 *of more and less*] by great and small. Cf. *1 Hen IV*, IV, iii, 68. "The  
*more and less* came in."

8 *translated*] transformed. So line 10, *infra*

12 *the strength of all thy state*] a periphrasis for "the full extent of thy  
strength." •



## SONNETS

But do not so; I love thee in such sort,  
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

### XCVII

How like a winter hath my absence been  
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!  
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!  
What old December's bareness every where!  
And yet this time removed was summer's time;  
The teeming autumn, big with rich increase  
Bearing the wanton burthen of the prime,  
Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease:  
Yet this abundant issue seem'd to me  
But hope of orphans and unfather'd fruit;  
For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,  
And, thou away, the very birds are mute;  
Or, if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer  
That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.

### XCVIII

From you have I been absent in the spring,  
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,

---

13-14 *But do not so . . . good report*] This couplet is repeated at the end of *Sonnet xxxvi*.

xcvii, 5 *time removed*] time of separation.

6 *The teeming autumn . . . increase*] Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, II, i, 112: "The childing autumn."

7 *prime*] spring. So *Lucrece*, 332.

xcviii, 2 *proud-pied April*] Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, ii, 26-28: "Such comfort as do lusty young men feel When well apparell'd April," etc.; *Tit. Andr.*, III, i, 18: "youthful April"

## SONNETS

Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,  
 That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.  
 Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell  
 Of different flowers in odour and in hue,  
 Could make me any summer's story tell,  
 Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:  
 Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,  
 Nor praise the deep vermillion in the rose; 10  
 They were but sweet, but figures of delight,  
 Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.  
     Yet seem'd it winter still, and, you away,  
     As with your shadow I with these did play.

4 *laugh'd and leap'd*] Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, I, i, 49: "to laugh and leap and say you are merry "

7 *any summer's story*] any gay, pleasant story. Cf. *Cymb.*, III, iv, 12-14: "If 't be *summer news* Smile to't before; if winterly, thou need'st But keep that countenance still."

8 *their proud lap*] Cf. *Rich. II*, V, ii, 47: "the green lap of the new come spring."

9-10 *Nor did I . . . in the rose*] Cf. Barnfield's *Affectionate Shepherd* (I, iii): "His *Ivory-white* and Alabaster skin Is staid throughout with rare *Vermillion* red. . . . But as the *Lillie* and the blushing *Rose*, So white and red on him in order growes " This is the only place where Shakespeare uses the word "vermilion " It is not uncommon in Elizabethan poetry. Cf. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, cii, 5: "*vermilion* dyes," and Daniel's *Rosamond* (1592), line 846. "*vermilion* red " (of roses). It is constantly found in French and Italian poetry (vermeil and vermiglio)

11 *but sweet, but figures of delight*] only sweetness, only figures of delight. "Sweet" is again used for "sweetness," xcix, 14, *infra* Cf., too, Constable's *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, No. vii (c. 1590, ed Hazlitt, 1859, p. 27): "But all those beauties were but figures of thy praise "

## SONNETS

### XCIX

The forward violet thus did I chide:  
 Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells,  
 If not from my love's breath? The purple pride  
 Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells  
 In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dyed.  
 The lily I condemned for thy hand,  
 And buds of marjoram had stol'n thy hair;  
 The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,  
 One blushing shame, another white despair;

XCIX, 1-14 The first line is metrically redundant, adding to the sonnet a fifteenth line. Many sonnets of fifteen lines appear in Barnes' *Parthenophil* (1593), e.g., xxxv, xxxvi, xxxviii, xxxix, xl, etc. For other irregularities of form in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* cf. cxxvi and cxlv, *infra*.

1, *seq.* *The forward violet, etc.* ] The common conceit that the flowers take their colour and smell from the poet's idol was probably suggested to Shakespeare by Constable's adaptation of it (*Diana* (1594), Decade I, Sonnet ix). Ronsard (*Amours*, I, cxl) tells how from the flowers "du beau jardin de son printemps riant" (i.e., from his mistress) come all the sweet perfumes of the East.

6 *for thy hand*] for stealing the whiteness of thy hand.

7 *buds of marjoram*] Buds of marjoram are dark purple red; the flowers are pink. Marjoram was best known as an ingredient of scent, and it is probably the perfume of this flower rather than its colour which the poet associates with his friend's hair. On the other hand, dark auburn hair might perhaps be poetically described as "marjoram coloured." See Suckling's *Tragedy of Brennoralt*, IV, i, 155: "Hair [of a girl] curling and cover'd like buds of marjoram," where "cover'd" is probably a misprint for "color'd."

8-9 *The roses fearfully . . . white despair*] Cf. *Lucrece*, 477-479: "The colour in thy face, That even for anger makes the lily pale, And the red rose blush at her own disgrace."

## SONNETS

A third, nor red nor white, had stol'n of both, 10  
 And to his robbery had annex'd thy breath;  
 But, for his theft, in pride of all his growth  
 A vengeful canker eat him up to death.  
 More flowers I noted, yet I none could see  
 But sweet or colour it had stol'n from thee.

Where art thou, Muse, that thou forget'st so long  
 To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?  
 Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,  
 Darkening thy power to lend base subjects light?  
 Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem  
 In gentle numbers time so idly spent;  
 Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem  
 And gives thy pen both skill and argument.  
 Rise, resty Muse, my love's sweet face survey,  
 If Time have any wrinkle graven there; 10

12 *in pride of all his growth*] in the glory of his prime

13 *A vengeful canker . . . death*] Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, II, iii, 30. "Full soon the canker death eats up that plant"; and see xxxv, 4, and lxx, 7, *supra*.

14-15 *More flowers . . . stol'n from thee*] Cf. Constable's *Diana* (Decade I, Sonnet ix, 9-10). "In brief, all *flowers* from her their virtue take; From her *sweet* breath their *sweet* smells do proceed"

c, 3 *fury*] poetic inspiration, a common usage Cf. xvii, 11, *supra*. "a poet's rage," and *Mids. N. Dr.*, V, i, 12. "The poet's eye, in a fine *frenzy* rolling."

8 *And gives thy pen . . . argument*] Cf. Ronsard, *Amours*, II, 12 "*ma plume sinon vous ne sçait autre sujet*," etc; for "argument" [*i e*, theme] see xxxviii, 3, and note.

9 *resty*] slothful, torpid.

## SONNETS

If any, be a satire to decay,  
 And make Time's spoils despised every where.  
     Give my love fame faster than Time wastes life;  
 So thou prevent'st his scythe and crooked knife.

### CI

O truant Muse, what shall be thy amends  
 For thy neglect of truth in beauty dyed?  
 Both truth and beauty on my love depends;  
 So dost thou too, and therein dignified.  
 Make answer, Muse: wilt thou not haply say,  
 "Truth needs no colour, with his colour fix'd;  
 Beauty no pencil, beauty's truth to lay;  
 But best is best, if never intermix'd?"  
 Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?  
 Excuse not silence so, for 't lies in thee 10  
 To make him much outlive a gilded tomb  
 And to be praised of ages yet to be.  
     Then do thy office, Muse; I teach thee how  
 To make him seem long hence as he shows now.

11 *satire*] satirist, no uncommon usage.

14 *So thou prevent'st*] In this manner thou anticipatest.

CI, 3 *truth and beauty*] The association of truth and beauty is similarly noticed in *Sonnets* xiv and liv, 1-2. So *Phoenix and Turtle*, 62-64.

6 *with his colour fix'd*] seeing that the colour or inherent disposition of my beloved is constant or unalterable.

7 *to lay*] to lay on (as of painters' colours), cf. *Tw Night*, I, v, 224-225: "red and white Nature's . . . hand laid on."

11 *gilded tomb*] So iv, 1: "*gilded monuments*"; cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, II, vii, 69: "*Gilded tombs do worms infold.*"

## SONNETS

### CII

My love is strengthen'd, though more weak in seeming;  
 I love not less, though less the show appear:  
 That love is merchandized whose rich esteeming  
 The owner's tongue doth publish every where.  
 Our love was new, and then but in the spring,  
 When I was wont to greet it with my lays;  
 As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,  
 And stops her pipe in growth of riper days:  
 Not that the summer is less pleasant now  
 Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night, 10  
 But that wild music burthens every bough,  
 And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.  
     Therefore, like her, I sometime hold my tongue,  
     Because I would not dull you with my song.

CII, 3-4 *That love is merchandized . . . every where*] Cf *L. L. L.*, II, i, 15-16: "Beauty is bought by judgment of the eye, Not utter'd by base sale of chapmen's tongues," and xxi, 14, *supra*.

7 *in summer's front*] Cf *Wint. Tale*, IV, iv, 2-3: "Flora Peering in *April's front*."

8-10 *stops her pipe . . . hush the night*] The nightingale is credited with singing only by night, for fear of competition with other birds, in *Merch. of Ven.*, V, i, 104 *seq.*; see, too, *Lucrece*, 1148. The bird is always feminine in Shakespeare, in view of her mythical descent from the outraged Philomela, wife of Tereus (see *Lucrece*, 1079 and 1128, and *Tit. Andr.*, II, iii, 43, *et passim*). The Quarto here reads *his pipe*, for which is rightly substituted *her pipe*.

12 *sweets grown common . . . dear delight*] Cf. lii, 3 *seq.*, *supra*, for a like sentiment.

## SONNETS

### CIII

Alack, what poverty my Muse brings forth,  
 That having such a scope to show her pride,  
 The argument, all bare, is of more worth  
 Than when it hath my added praise beside!  
 O, blame me not, if I no more can write!  
 Look in your glass, and there appears a face  
 That over-goes my blunt invention quite,  
 Dulling my lines and doing me disgrace.  
 Were it not sinful then, striving to mend,  
 To mar the subject that before was well? 10  
 For to no other pass my verses tend  
 Than of your graces and your gifts to tell;  
 And more, much more, than in my verse can sit,  
 Your own glass shows you when you look in it.

### CIV

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,  
 For as you were when first your eye I eyed,

CIII, 1 *Alack, what poverty . . . forth*] Cf. lxxxiv, 5: "Lean penury within that pen doth dwell," etc.

3 *The argument, all bare*] Cf. xxvi, 5-7, where the poet fears "wit so poor as mine May make" his effort "seem bare" and "all naked." For "argument" (i. e., theme), see xxxviii, 3.

6-7 *a face . . . invention quite*] Cf. *Othello*, II, i, 61-63: "a maid . . . that excels the quirks of blazoning pens."

9-10 *striving to mend . . . was well*] Cf. *K. John*, IV, ii, 28-29, and *Lear*, I, iv, 347: "Striving to better, oft we mar what's well."

## SONNETS

Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold  
 Have from the forests shook three summers' pride,  
 Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd  
 In process of the seasons have I seen,  
 Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd,  
 Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.  
 Ah, yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,  
 Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived;  
 So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,  
 Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived:  
     For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred;  
     Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead.

10

### CV

Let not my love be call'd idolatry,  
 Nor my beloved as an idol show,

civ, 3-7 *Three winters cold . . . Junes burn'd*] An intimation that the poet's friendship was three years old. The period seems to have been more or less conventional among the sonneteers. Cf. Ronsard's *Sonnets pour Hélène*, I, xiv, which begins: "*Trois ans sont ja passez que ton œil me tient pris,*" and Daniel in *Sonnets after Astrophel*, 1591. No. xvii (of his love): "That was with blood and *three years'* witness signed." For "summer's pride" (line 4) cf. *Rom. and Jul*, I, ii, 10 "*summers . . . in their pride.*"

9-10 *like a dial-hand, Steal*] Cf. lvii, 7, *supra*: "thy *dial's* shady *stealth*," and *Rich. III*, III, vii, 168: "the *stealing* hours of time"

cv, 1-2 *idolatry . . . idol*] "Idolatry" is only used five times elsewhere by Shakespeare. "Idolatrous" is used once in *All's Well*, I, i, 91 (*idolatrous* fancy). Tasso in Sonnet cxxvi (*Works*, ed. Solerti, ii, p. 201) likens his lady-loves to "*idoli*" (line 11) and his passion to "*ingiusta idolatria d'amore*" (line 14). Tasso also describes himself in relation with his beloved first patron, the Duke of Ferrara, as "*almost an idolater*" (Tasso's *Opere*, Pisa, 1831-1832, vol. xiii, p. 298).



## SONNETS

Since all alike my songs and praises be  
 To one, of one, still such, and ever so.  
 Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,  
 Still constant in a wondrous excellence;  
 Therefore my verse to constancy confined,  
 One thing expressing, leaves out difference.  
 "Fair, kind, and true," is all my argument,  
 "Fair, kind, and true," varying to other words;                      10  
 And in this change is my invention spent,  
 Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.  
     "Fair, kind, and true," have often lived alone,  
     Which three till now never kept seat in one.

### CVI

When in the chronicle of wasted time  
 I see descriptions of the fairest wights,  
 And beauty making beautiful old rhyme  
 In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights,  
 Then, in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,  
 Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,  
 I see their antique pen would have express'd  
 Even such a beauty as you master now.

9 "*Fair, kind, and true*"] "*Wise, fair and true*" make up, according to Lorenzo, the threefold virtue of his ideal mistress Jessica (*Merch. of Ven.*, II, vi, 52-57).

CVI, 5-6 *in the blazon . . . of brow*] Cf. *Tw. Night*, I, v, 276-277: "Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions and spirit, Do give thee five-fold blazon." "Blazon" is the technical description of the heraldic shield.

7-8 *I see . . . master now*] Cf. Spenser's sonnet to Lord Howard of Effingham (in *Faerie Queene*, 1590): "Make you ensample to the present age Of th' old Heroes whose famous offspring The *antique* Poets wont so much to sing."

## SONNETS

So all their praises are but prophecies  
 Of this our time, all you prefiguring;  
 And, for they look'd but with divining eyes,  
 They had not skill enough your worth to sing:  
     For we, which now behold these present days,  
     Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

10

### CVII

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul  
 Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,  
 Can yet the lease of my true love control,  
 Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.

9-12 *So all their praises . . . your worth to sing*] Henry Constable in his *Miscellaneous Sonnets* (No. vii) written about 1590 (see Hazlitt's ed., 1859, p. 27) — not in his *Diana* — anticipated these lines thus:

"Miracle of the world, I never will deny  
 That former poets praise the beauty of their days;  
 But all those beauties were but figures of thy praise,  
 And all those poets did of thee but prophecy."

Constable significantly headed this sonnet: "To his Mistrisse, upon occasion of a Petrarch he gave her, showing her the reason why the Italian commentators dissent so much in the exposition thereof."

12 *skill*] Malone's substitution for the Quarto *still*.

cvii, 1 *the prophetic soul*] Cf. *Hamlet*, I, v, 40, and note.

4 *Supposed . . . doom*] Apparently an allusion to the doom or punishment of confinement or imprisonment awarded to Shakespeare's patron the Earl of Southampton, for complicity in the Earl of Essex's rebellion of 1601, and to his restoration to liberty on the accession of James I in 1603 Samuel Daniel, John Davies of Hereford, and other poets celebrated Southampton's enfranchisement in like terms. Cf. Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 152

## SONNETS

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,  
 And the sad augurs mock their own presage;  
 Incertainties now crown themselves assured,  
 And peace proclaims olives of endless age.  
 Now with the drops of this most balmy time  
 My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes, . . . 10  
 Since, spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,  
 While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes:  
 And thou in this shalt find thy monument,  
 When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

- 5 *The mortal . . . endured*] Queen Elizabeth, whom Spenser, Raleigh, Barnfield, and other poets of the day habitually named Cynthia (*i. e.*, the moon), died March 24, 1603. Poetic elegists invariably lamented her death in like phraseology; *e. g.*, "Fair Cynthia's dead"; "Luna's extinct"; "Nought can *eclipse* her light"; "Her sun *eclipsed* did set."
- 6 *And the sad augurs mock their own presage*] Anticipation of disorder on Queen Elizabeth's death was general in London, but was belied by the event. Cf. Manningham's *Diary* (Camd. Soc. 147): "garboiles . . . were more feared than perceived . . . Noe tumult, noe contradiction, noe disorder in the city . . . God be thanked, our King has his right." So Daniel in his *Panegyrick* to James I, 1603, st. xiii-xiv.
- 8 *And peace . . . endless age*] James I, whose love of peace was notorious, was said to reach his throne "not with an *olive* branch in his hand, but with a whole forest of *olives* round about him, for he brought not *peace* to this kingdom alone" (Gervase Markham, *Honour in his Perfection*, 1624).
- 9 *this most balmy time*] James I ascended the throne in a spring of rarely rivalled clemency — "this sweetest of all sweet springs." Cf. Daniel's *Panegyrick*, st. xvii, and Davies' *Microcosmos* (1603, ed. Grosart, p. 15), pref. in honour of King James.
- 10 *subscribes*] yields: a common usage.
- 12 *he insults o'er . . . tribes*] he triumphs over the dead.
- 14 *tyrants' crests*] Cf. lv, 1 *seq.*, *supra*.

## SONNETS

### CVIII .

What 's in the brain, that ink may character,  
 Which hath not figured to thee my true spirit?  
 What 's new, to speak, what new to register,  
 That may express my love, or thy dear merit?  
 Nothing, sweet boy; but yet, like prayers divine,  
 I must each day say o'er the very same;  
 Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,  
 Even as when first I hallowed thy fair name.  
 So that eternal love in love's fresh case  
 Weighs not the dust and injury of age, 10  
 Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,  
 But makes antiquity for aye his page; ,  
     Finding the first conceit of love there bred,  
     Where time and outward form would show it dead.

### CIX

O, never say that I was false of heart,  
 Though absence seem'd my flame to qualify.  
 As easy might I from myself depart

cviii, 3 *new to register*] Malone's correction of the Quarto reading *now to register*.

9 *in love's fresh case*] in the case of love which is ever fresh or young.

10 *Weighs not*] Cf. *L. L. L.*, V, ii, 27: "You *weigh* me *not*?—O, that 's you care not for me."

14 *Where time . . . show it dead*] In a person whose age and outward appearance would seem to show that the sentiment of love was dead in him.

cix, 2 *qualify*] diminish, allay Cf. *Lucrece*, 424, and note.

## SONNETS

As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie:  
 That is my home of love: if I have ranged,  
 Like him that travels, I return again;  
 Just to the time, not with the time exchanged,  
 So that myself bring water for my stain.  
 Never believe, though in my nature reign'd  
 All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,  
 That it could so preposterously be stain'd,  
 To leave for nothing all thy sum of good;  
     For nothing this wide universe I call,  
     Save thou, my rose; in it thou art my all.

10

### CX

Alas, 't is true I have gone here and there,  
 And made myself a motley to the view,

4 *from my soul . . . doth lie*] Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 580-582: "her [Venus's] heart . . . He [Adonis] carries thence incaged in his breast," and *L L L.*, V, ii, 804: "my heart is in thy breast." Cf. *Rich. III.*, I, ii, 204

5-6 *That is my home . . . return again*] Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, III, ii, 171-172: "My heart to her but as *guest-wise sojourn'd*, And now to Helen is it *home return'd*."

7-8 *Just to the time . . . stain*] Just to the minute, quite punctually, not altered by the interval of absence, so that in my own person I make reparation for any offence of absence.

10 *all kinds of blood*] all sorts of temperaments.

14 *Save thou*] Apart from thee.

cx, 2 *a motley*] a fool who habitually wore a patchwork or motley coat. The poet is imagined by commentators to reproach himself obscurely here with the folly of his profession of actor (cf. xxiii, 1, *supra*). But Spenser (*Amorctti*, liv) identifies himself, wholly in a figurative sense, with a player whose varied impersonations his mistress watches, like a spectator in a theatre.

## SONNETS

Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,  
 Made old offences of affections new;  
 Most true it is that I have look'd on truth  
 Askance and strangely: but, by all above,  
 These blenches gave my heart another youth,  
 And worse essays proved thee my best of love.  
 Now all is done, have what shall have no end:  
 Mine appetite I never more will grind  
 On newer proof, to try an older friend,  
 A god in love, to whom I am confined.

10

Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,  
 Even to thy pure and most most loving breast.

### CXI

O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,  
 The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,  
 That did not better for my life provide  
 Than public means which public manners breeds.

3 *Gored*] Outraged, disgraced. Cf. *Hamlet*, V, ii, 242: "To keep my name *ungored*."

4 *Made old . . . new*] Sinned against old friendships by forming new ones  
 There is some inversion of phraseology here but the general sense is clear.

6 *strangely*] distantly. Cf. xlix, 5, and lxxix, 7, *supra*.

7 *blenches*] aberrations, flinchings from virtue. The substantive is rare  
 Cf. for the verb *Hamlet*, II, ii, 593. "if he but *blench* "

8 *worse essays*] trials of more disreputable conduct.

9 *have what shall have no end*] Cf. Shakespeare's dedication of *Lucrece* to Lord Southampton: "the love I dedicate to your lordship is *without end*." See *Sonnet xxvi*, *supra*.

CXI, 4 *Than public means . . . breeds*] The phrase is commonly assumed to imply scorn of the poet's profession of actor.

## SONNETS

---

Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,  
And almost thence my nature is subdued  
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand:  
Pity me then and wish I were renew'd;  
Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink  
Potions of eisel 'gainst my strong infection; 10  
No bitterness that I will bitter think,  
Nor double penance, to correct correction.  
Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye  
Even that your pity is enough to cure me.

### CXII

Your love and pity doth the impression fill  
Which vulgar scandal stamp'd upon my brow;  
For what care I who calls me well or ill,  
So you o'er-green my bad, my good allow?  
You are my all the world, and I must strive  
To know my shames and praises from your tongue;  
None else to me, nor I to none alive,  
That my steel'd sense or changes right or wrong.

---

5 *a brand*] a stigma of disgrace.

10 *eisel*] vinegar, which was held to be a sovereign protection against infection of the plague. Cf. *Hamlet*, V, i, 270, and note.

CXII, 4 *o'er-green my bad . . . allow*] throw a friendly veil over my faults and approve my virtues "O'er-green," a rare word, probably alludes to the covering of rough ground with greensward.

7-8 *None else . . . wrong*] Nobody else is anything to me nor I anything to anybody else who is likely to endow my hardened sensibility or my vacillations of temper with any sense of right or wrong. Nobody else can influence me for good or ill.

## SONNETS

In so profound abysm I throw all care  
 Of others' voices, that my adder's sense 10  
 To critic and to flatterer stopped are.  
 Mark how with my neglect I do dispense:  
     You are so strongly in my purpose bred  
     „That all the world besides methinks are dead.

### CXIII

Since I left you mine eye is in my mind,  
 And that which governs me to go about  
 Doth part his function and is partly blind,  
 Seems seeing, but effectually is out;  
 For it no form delivers to the heart  
 Of bird, of flower, or shape, which it doth latch:

10 *my adder's sense*] my deaf ears Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, II, ii, 172:  
     "ears more deaf than adders"

11 *critic*] censurer; always thus in Shakespeare

12 *with my neglect I do dispense*] I excuse my neglect "Dispense with"  
     (*i. e.*, obtain dispensation for); thrice so in *Lucrece* (1070, 1279,  
     1704).

13 *in my purpose bred*] rooted in my thought.

14 *besides methinks are dead*] Thus Malone The Quarto reads, "*besides  
     methinkes y' are dead,*" which is unintelligible.

CXIII, 1 *mine eye is in my mind*] Cf. *Lucrece*, 1426: "the eye of mind,"  
     and *Hamlet*, I, ii, 185: "In my mind's eye."

3 *part*] depart from, forsake: no uncommon usage.

4 *is out*] is out of the right path; strays into error. Cf. *L. L. L.*, IV, i, 126:  
     "your hand *is out*," and *Tw. Night*, II, iii, 173. "I am a foul way  
     *out*."

5-6 *For it no form . . . it doth latch*] Cf. liii, *supra*. These lines expand  
     Petrarch's beautiful Canzone xv, headed "In ogni cosa trova il Poeta  
     l'immagine di Laura," where the poet detects his mistress's form in every



## SONNETS

Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,  
 Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch;  
 For if it see the rudest or gentlest sight,  
 The most sweet favour or deformed'st creature, 10  
 The mountain or the sea, the day or night,  
 The crow or dove, it shapes them to your feature:  
     Incapable of more, replete with you,  
     My most true mind thus maketh mine untrue.

### CXIV

Or whether doth my mind, being crown'd with you,  
 Drink up the monarch's plague, this flattery?  
 Or whether shall I say, mine eye saith true,  
 And that your love taught it this alchemy,  
 To make of monsters and things indigest

aspect of nature. "Latch" means "catch," "lay hold of." Cf *Mids. N. Dr.*, III, ii, 36 ("But hast thou yet *latch'd* the Athenian's eyes?") and *Macb.*, IV, iii, 195

10 *favour*] face, countenance.

14 *mine untrue*] Thus the original Quarto. The words are difficult. "Untrue" may possibly be used like a noun for "untruth," "deception." "Fair" is repeatedly, and "true" and "false" are occasionally, used as substantives. Cf *Meas. for Meas.*, II, iv, 170: "my false o'erweighs your true." Modern editors usually substitute *mine eye untrue*, which seems a permissible change. Cf. cxiv, 3: "*mine eye saith true*," and civ, 12: "*mine eye* may be deceived." For the like ambiguity in similiar context between "mine" and "mine eye" see *Two Gent.*, II, iv, 192.

CXIV, 4-6 *love taught it this alchemy . . . sweet self resemble*] Cf. *Mids. N. Dr.*, I, i, 232-233: "Things base and vile holding no quantity  
*Love can transpose to form and dignity.*"

5 *indigest*] unformed, shapeless.

## SONNETS

Such cherubims as your sweet self resemble,  
 Creating every bad a perfect best, .  
 As fast as objects to his beams assemble?  
 O, 't is the first; 't is flattery in my seeing,  
 And my great mind most kingly drinks it up: 10  
 Mine eye well knows what with his gust is 'greeing,  
 And to his palate doth prepare the cup:  
 If it be poison'd, 't is the lesser sin  
 That mine eye loves it and doth first begin.

### CXV

Those lines that I before have writ do lie,  
 Even those that said I could not love you dearer:  
 Yet then my judgement knew no reason why  
 My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer.  
 But reckoning Time, whose million'd accidents  
 Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,  
 Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,  
 Divert strong minds to the course of altering things;

9 *O, 't is the first; 't is flattery in my seeing*] Cf. *Tw. Night*, I, v, 293:  
 “*Mine eye too great a flatterer for my mind*” The poet has offered two  
 alternative explanations of his finding his friend's fair shape in every  
 aspect of nature and accepts “the first” solution that his eye is  
 flattering his mind. He rejects the second theory that nature is  
 genuinely beautified by love's alchemy.

11 *his gust*] its (*i. e.*, the mind's) taste.

13 *If it be poison'd*] An allusion to the perils lurking in princes' cups (line  
 10). Cf. *K. John*, V, vi, 28: “who did *taste* to him?” (*i. e.*, to the  
 poisoned king). So *England's Helicon* (ed. Bullen, p. 37): “Golden  
 cups do harbour poison.”

CXV, 7 *Tan*] Discolour, spoil.

## SONNETS

Alas, why, fearing of Time's tyranny,  
 Might I not then say "Now I love you best," 10  
 When I was certain o'er incertainty,  
 Crowning the present, doubting of the rest?  
 Love is a babe; then might I not say so,  
 To give full growth to that which still doth grow?

### CXVI

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
 Admit impediments. Love is not love  
 Which alters when it alteration finds,  
 Or bends with the remover to remove:  
 O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,  
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
 It is the star to every wandering bark,  
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

11-12 *certain . . . present*] Cf. cvii, 7: "*Incertainities* now crown themselves assured."

CXVI, 1 *marriage*] union. Cf. lxxx, 1, *supra*. "Impediments" (line 2) suggests the words in the marriage service: "If any of you know cause or just *impediment*," etc.

2-3 *Love is not love . . . finds*] Cf. *Lear*, I, i, 238-239: "Love's not love When it is mingled with regards."

4 *Or bends . . . to remove*] Or inclines to inconstancy at the call of the one who changes (or who is fickle). Cf. xxv, 13-14: "Then happy I that love and am beloved Where I may not *remove* nor be *removed*," and note there.

5-6 *it is an ever-fixed mark . . . never shaken*] Cf. *Cor.*, V, iii, 74: "Like a great sea-mark, standing every flaw."

8 *Whose worth's . . . be taken*] The star's beneficial influence is incalculable, although its altitude or elevation and position in the sky may be calculated for purposes of navigation.

## SONNETS

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
 Within his bending sickle's compass come; 10  
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
     If this be error and upon me proved,  
     I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

### CXVII

Accuse me thus: that I have scanted all  
 Wherein I should your great deserts repay,  
 Forgot upon your dearest love to call,  
 Whereto all bonds do tie me day by day;  
 That I have frequent been with unknown minds,  
 And given to time your own dear-purchased right;  
 That I have hoisted sail to all the winds  
 Which should transport me farthest from your sight.  
 Book both my wilfulness and errors down,  
 And on just proof surmise accumulate; 10

9 *Love's not Time's fool*] Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, V, iv, 81: "But thought's the slave of life, and *life time's fool*" (*i. e.*, Time's plaything).

11 *his brief hours*] Time's brief hours.

12 *bears it out even to . . . doom*] endures to the brink of the last judgment. Cf. *All's Well*, III, iii, 5-6: "to bear it To the extreme edge of hazard."

CXVII, 4 *Whereto all bonds do tie me*] For the legal pun on "bonds" cf. Barnes' *Parthenophil* (1593), xi, 13: "And if in *bonds* to thee my love be tied."

5 *unknown minds*] persons not worth the knowing Cf. xliii, 2 "things unrespected."

6 *given to time . . . right*] squandered your rights in me (by wasting my time on others). Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, II, iii, 42-43: "And *given* my treasures and my rights of thee To thick-eyed musing."

## SONNETS

Bring me within the level of your frown,  
 But shoot not at me in your waken'd hate;  
     Since my appeal says I did strive to prove  
     The constancy and virtue of your love.

### CXVIII

Like as, to make our appetites more keen,  
 With eager compounds we our palate urge;  
 As, to prevent our maladies unseen,  
 We sicken to shun sickness when we purge;  
 Even so, being full of your ne'er-cloying sweetness,  
 To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding;  
 And sick of welfare found a kind of meetness  
 To be diseased, ere that there was true needing.  
 Thus policy in love, to anticipate  
 The ills that were not, grew to faults assured,  
 And brought to medicine a healthful state,  
 Which, rank of goodness, would by ill be cured:

10

---

13-14 *I did strive . . . of your love*] Cf. cx, 10-11, *supra*.  
 cxviii, 2 *eager*] sharp, bitter, appetising.

3 *to prevent*] to anticipate.

7 *sick of welfare*] Cf. *Æ Hen. IV*, IV, i, 64: "To diet rank minds *sick of happiness*." See line 12, and note, *infra*.

9-14 *Thus policy . . . sick of you*] Thus love's policy in the endeavour to anticipate the evils of an expected satiety brought on positive maladies; it submitted to medical treatment a healthy condition, which overflowing in robustness foolishly sought benefit from disagreeable medicaments. In the result the drugs poisoned the poet, who, surfeited with his affection, thought to cure himself of its anticipated evils.

12 *rank of goodness*] surfeited with or overflowing in good health. Cf. line 7, *supra*: "sick of welfare"; *Ant. and Cleop.*, V, ii, 211:

## SONNETS

But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,  
Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.

### CXIX

What potions have I drunk of Siren tears,  
Distill'd from limbecks foul as hell within,  
Applying fears to hopes and hopes to fears,  
Still losing when I saw myself to win!  
What wretched errors hath my heart committed,  
Whilst it hath thought itself so blessed never!  
How have mine eyes out of their spheres been fitted,  
In the distraction of this madding fever!  
O benefit of ill! now I find true  
That better is by evil still made better;  
And ruin'd love, when it is built anew,  
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater.

10

“Rank of gross diet”, and *Hamlet*, IV, vii, 117: “goodness growing to a plurisy.”

CXIX, 1-2 *What potions . . . limbecks*] Cf Barnes' *Parthenophil*, xlix, where, after denouncing his mistress as a *Siren*, the poet writes:

“From my love's *lembic* [have I] still [*de*] *stilled tears*” “Limbeck,” “lembic,” or “alembic” is the vessel used in distillation

4 *Still losing . . . to win*] Cf. cxxix, 11 (of lust): “A bliss in proof, and prov'd, a very woe.”

7 *How have mine eyes . . . been fitted*] How have mine eyes started from their spheres as in a convulsive fit Cf. *Mids N Dr.*, II, i, 153: “stars shot madly from their spheres,” and II, ii, 99: “*sphery eyne*,” and *Hamlet*, I, v, 17: “Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from *their spheres*”

10 *better is by evil . . . better*] Cf. *As you like it*, II, i, 12. “Sweet are the uses of adversity”

11 *ruin'd love . . . built anew*] Cf. *Com. of Errors*, III, ii, 4: “Shall love

## SONNETS

So I return rebuked to my content,  
And gain by ill thrice more than I have spent.

### CXX

That you were once unkind befriends me now,  
And for that sorrow which I then did feel  
Needs must I under my transgression bow,  
Unless my nerves were brass or hammer'd steel.  
For if you were by my unkindness shaken,  
As I by yours, you've pass'd a hell of time;  
And I, a tyrant, have no leisure taken  
To weigh how once I suffer'd in your crime.  
O, that our night of woe might have remember'd  
My deepest sense, how hard true sorrow hits, 10  
And soon to you, as you to me, then tender'd  
The humble salve which wounded bosoms fits!  
But that your trespass now becomes a fee;  
Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me.

---

in building, grow so ruinous?" and *Troil. and Cress.*, IV, ii, 102: "the strong base and *building of my love*." The figure, which identifies love with a building or "mansion" which is likely to grow "ruinous" unless subjected to "repair," is fully expounded in *Two Gent.*, V, iv, 7-11.

CXX, 6 *you've pass'd a hell of time*] Cf. *Lucrece*, 1287-1288: "And that deep torture may be call'd a *hell*, Where more is felt than one hath power to tell"; see also *Rich. III.*, I, iv, 62, and *Othello*, V, ii, 140.

9 *our night of woe*] "Our" suggests the combined association (with "the night of woe") of the poet who caused it and the friend who suffered from it.

9-10 *might have . . . sense*] might have reminded my inmost soul. For this causative use of "remember'd" cf. *Wint. Tale*, III, ii, 227, and *Lear*, I, iv, 64.

# SONNETS

CXXI ,

'T is better to be vile than vile esteemed,  
 When not to be receives reproach of being;  
 And the just pleasure lost, which is so deemed  
 Not by our feeling but by others' seeing:  
 For why should others' false adulterate eyes  
 Give salutation to my sportive blood?  
 Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,  
 Which in their wills count bad what I think good?  
 No, I am that I am, and they that level  
 At my abuses reckon up their own:  
 I may be straight, though they themselves be bevel;  
 By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be shown;  
     Unless this general evil they maintain,  
     All men are bad and in their badness reign.

10

CXXI, 2 *When not to be . . . being*] When not to be vile (i. e., being virtuous) receives the reproach of being vile.

3-4 *And the just pleasure lost . . . others' seeing*] And all sense of pleasure is lost in an action which, although one knows it to be virtuous and lawful, is unjustly held by the world to be vile.

6 *Give salutation . . . blood*] Stir (by greeting) or stimulate my wanton blood. Cf. *Hen. VIII*, II, iii, 103: "If this *salute my blood* a jot"

8 *in their wills*] at will, at their good pleasure Cf. *lvii*, 13 "in your will," and note. For the varied meanings of "will" see *cxv*, 1

9 *I am that I am*] Cf. *3 Hen. VI*, V, vi, 83: "I am myself alone," and *Othello*, I, i, 66: "I am not what I am."

*level*] aim. Cf. *cxvii*, 11, *supra*.

11 *bevel*] crooked, out of the square; a term from carpentry.

13 *this general evil*] this general or universal principle of evil.



# SONNETS

## CXXII

Thy gift, thy tables, are within my brain  
 Full character'd with lasting memory,  
 Which shall above that idle rank remain,  
 Beyond all date, even to eternity;  
 Or, at the least, so long as brain and heart  
 Have faculty by nature to subsist;  
 Till each to razed oblivion yield his part  
 Of thee, thy record never can be miss'd.  
 That poor retention could not so much hold,  
 Nor need I tallies thy dear love to score;  
 Therefore to give them from me was I bold,  
 To trust those tables that receive thee more:  
     To keep an adjunct to remember thee  
     Were to import forgetfulness in me.

10

CXXII, 1 *Thy gift, thy tables*] Apparently the reference is to the friend's gift to the poet of a memorandum book which the latter had given away (line 11). In lxxvii, *supra*, the poet would seem to have made the same kind of present to the friend.

2 *Full character'd . . . memory*] Cf. *Two Gent*, II, vii, 3-4: "the *table* wherein all my thoughts Are visibly *character'd*" [*i e*, inscribed] So *Hamlet*, I, iii, 58, and I, v, 98: "the *table* of my memory."

3 *above that idle rank*] above the dignity of such humble objects as tables or memorandum books.

5-6 *so long . . . to subsist*] Cf. *Hamlet*, I, v, 96.

9 *That poor retention . . . hold*] That poor instrument for retaining memoranda could not hold my large description of thee.

10 *tallies*] sticks on which notches were scored for the purpose of keeping accounts. The word is used by Shakespeare elsewhere only in 2 *Hen. VI*, IV, vii, 33.

14 *import*] impute.

# SONNETS

## CXXIII

No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change:  
 Thy pyramids built up with newer might  
 To me are nothing novel, nothing strange;  
 They are but dressings of a former sight.  
 Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire  
 What thou dost foist upon us that is old;  
 And rather make them born to our desire  
 Than think that we before have heard them told.

CXXIII, 2 *Thy pyramids . . . newer might*] Time's great structures built with ever-increasing solidity

4 *They are but dressings of a former sight*] They are but rehabilitations of what has been seen or has existed in former times. Here Shakespeare draws further on that doctrine of the indestructibility of matter in spite of its outward mutability which Ovid expounds in his *Metam*, bk. xv. Cf. Golding's translation, 1612 ed., p. 185 b:

"Things eb and flow: euen so the tymes by kind  
 Do flee and follow both at once, and euermore renew;"

and p. 186 b:

"No kind of thing keepes ay his shape and hew:  
 For nature louing euer change, repayres one shape anew  
 Upon another, neither doth there perish ought (trust mee)  
 In all the world, but altring takes new shape"

Shakespeare repeatedly lays the same passage in Ovid under contribution (cf. xv, lix, lxiii, lxiv, and lxv). Spenser previously expounded the like doctrine in his *Faerie Queene*, III, vi, st. 37 seq.:

"The substance is not chaunged nor altered  
 But th' only forme and outward fashion"

7 *And rather . . . to our desire*] And rather cherish the impression that things really old are newly created to give us pleasure.

## SONNETS

Thy registers and thee I both defy,  
 Not wondering at the present nor the past, 10  
 For thy records and what we see doth lie,  
 Made more or less by thy continual haste.  
 This I do vow, and this shall ever be,  
 I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee.

### CXXIV

If my dear love were but the child of state,  
 It might for Fortune's bastard be unfather'd,  
 As subject to Time's love or to Time's hate,  
 Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers gather'd.  
 No, it was builded far from accident;  
 It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls  
 Under the blow of thrall'd discontent,  
 Whereto the inviting time our fashion calls:

11 *doth lie*] the verb in the singular with a subject ("thy records and what we see") in the plural. The deceptions of growth and decay practised on us by Time's records and our own visions are due to the endless variability of indestructible matter. Nothing is new nor old.

CXXIV, 1 *the child of state*] the child of circumstance, which is always changing.

2 *unfather'd*] without an acknowledged father.

7-8 *thrall'd discontent . . . calls*] a possible vague allusion to the social and political unrest which distinguished alike the last decade of Elizabeth's reign and the first decade of James I's reign. Unemployment and Catholic plots against the throne were the chief causes of disquiet. The former source of "discontent," which produced much agrarian disturbance, might well bear the epithet "thrall'd."

## SONNETS

It fears not policy, that heretic,  
 Which works on leases of short-number'd hours, 10  
 But all alone stands hugely politic,  
 That it nor grows with heat nor drowns with showers.  
 To this I witness call the fools of time,  
 Which die for goodness, who have lived for crime.

### CXXV

Were 't aught to me I bore the canopy,  
 With my extern the outward honouring,  
 Or laid great bases for eternity,  
 Which prove more short than waste or ruining?

---

9-10 *policy, that heretic . . . short-number'd hours*] "Policy" means "intrigue," "underhand dealing" There is a possible reference to the short-sighted political intrigues of the "heretic" Papists who under the Jesuit Parsons' guidance were specially active during the close of Queen Elizabeth's reign in eager anticipation of her early death

11 *hugely politic*] infinitely wise and prudent. "Politic," although often used by Shakespeare in a bad sense (like *policy*, line 9, *supra*), has here its good sense

12 *grows with heat*] Thus the original Quarto Steevens substituted *glows with heat* But expanse or increase is an ordinary effect of heat

13 *the fools of time*] the playthings of time, men of whom time takes no serious account. Cf. cxvi, 3, *supra*. "Love's not *Time's* fool."

14 *Which die . . . for crime*] Penitent traitors, who expiated their crimes with piety on the scaffold. The words would apply to any political or religious conspirator against the throne who suffered capital punishment in Shakespeare's day. All met their death with prayer and pious courage. To this fact the poet ironically directs attention by way of indicating that their lives, unlike his unalterable affection were profitless because they were inconstant or inconsistent

CXXV, 1-2 *Were 't aught to me . . . honouring*] Would it have been any benefit to me that I should take part in the formal ceremony of

## SONNETS

Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour  
 Lose all, and more, by paying too much rent,  
 For compound sweet forgoing simple savour,  
 Pitiful thrivers, in their gazing spent?  
 No, let me be obsequious in thy heart,  
 And take thou my oblation, poor but free,  
 Which is not mix'd with seconds, knows no art  
 But mutual render, only me for thee.

10

---

honour (in merely holding up "the canopy"), being merely sensible of the outward forms or semblance, with no inward sincerity? Cf. *Othello*, I, i, 62-64: "when my *outward* action doth demonstrate The native act and figure of my heart In *compliment extern*." The poet is repudiating the insinuation that he honoured his beloved patron with mere insincere lip-service and flimsy promises of eternalising his fame

5-6 *dwellers on form and favour . . . too much rent*] those eulogists who, laying excessive emphasis on an adored patron's fine figure and good looks, forfeit his favour, and worse, by overdoing their obligations.

7 *compound . . . simple*] The implied contrast between *compound* and *simple* interest points again at the extravagant compliment which the pitiful poetic sycophant substitutes for simple writing in vain hope of added lucre

9 *let me be obsequious in*] let me pay due reverence or devotion to. See xxxi, 5, *supra*, and note. With the tenor of the context cf. Drayton's *Idea*, 1599, No. xlix: "Receive the incense which I offer here  
 . . . My soul's oblations to thy sacred Name!"

11 *is not mix'd with seconds*] is of the finest quality. "Seconds" (*i. e.*, coarse or mixed grains) is still used as the technical name of an inferior quality of "flour"; the word is appropriate to "oblation" (line 10), an offering of grain. Sir Christopher Hatton writing to Queen Elizabeth in November, 1591, bids her "sift the chaff from the *wheat* so that the *corn* of your commonwealth would be more *pure*, and *mixt grains* would less infect the sinews of your surety." (See *Nicolas' Life*, p. 497.)

## SONNETS

Hence, thou suborn'd informer! a true soul  
When most impeach'd stands least in thy control.

### CXXVI

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power  
Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle, hour;

13 *suborn'd informer*] Canon Beeching ingeniously suggests an apostrophe to a false accuser who has brought against the poet a charge of insincerity which the opening lines of this sonnet repel. Desportes very similarly apostrophises "*rapporteurs dangereux*" who spread "*ce méchant bruit*" that his mistress "*fait nouveau change*" (*Diane*, II, xxxviii). Jealousy commonly inspires false witness against lovers' sincerity and is apostrophised as "*sour informer*" (*Venus and Adonis*, 655), and as "*provoker and maintainer of vain lies*" (Barnes' *Parthenophil*, lxxxi). A jealous rival-poet may be assumed to be the "*suborn'd informer*" here

cxxvi This poem was omitted from Shakespeare's "Poems" of 1640. It is not in the sonnet form, being twelve lines in couplets. So-called "sonnets" in twelve lines figure in Lodge's *Phyllis* (1593), viii, xxvi, Linche's *Diella* (1596), xiii, and W. Smith's *Chloris* (1596), xxvii (in couplets). In the Quarto of 1609 there appeared at the end of this "sonnet" two pairs of brackets, one above the other, enclosing blank spaces, an indication on the part of the printer that he expected to fill in later the thirteenth and fourteenth lines. But the construction of the poem in couplets justified no such expectation. Nor can it be fairly argued that the empty brackets, a mere typographical misconception, were designed to denote the close of the first section of sonnets addressed to a man and the opening of the second section addressed to a woman. Internal and other evidence supports no such clear-cut bisection of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*.

2 *Time's fickle glass . . . hour*] Cf. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, vii, viii, st. 1, lines 8-9: (Of life) "Whose flowring pride so fading and so *fickle Short time* shall soon cut down with his consuming *sickle*."

## SONNETS

Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st  
 Thy lovers withering as thy sweet self grow'st;  
 If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,  
 As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,  
 She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill  
 May time disgrace and wretched minutes kill.  
 Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!  
 She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure:      10  
     Her audit, though delay'd, answer'd must be,  
     And her quietus is to render thee.

3 *Who hast by waning grown*] Another reminiscence of Ovid's philosophy (*Metam.*, xv) touching the ceaseless "eb and flow" of "Dame Nature" as qualified by Time. See xv, lxiii, lxiv, lxv, and cxxiii, *supra*. Cf. Golding's translation (1612 ed., p. 185 b): "Things eb and flow . . . Do flee and follow both at once and euermore renew."

5-8 *Nature, sovereign mistress . . . wretched minutes kill*] Shakespeare, playfully adapting Ovid's doctrine of "growth by waning," follows the Latin poet in making "Dame Nature," by exercise of "*cunning hand*"—"artifices manus" in the Latin (cf. line 7, "her skill")—cherish youth at the outset in defiance of Time, "eater up of things." All Nature's efforts to discredit Time's power are, however, doomed to futility. Her mutations mean destruction of individual youth. "And when that long continuance hath them [*i. e.*, living things] bit, You [*i. e.*, Time] leisurely by lingering death consume them every whit."

9-10 *O thou minion . . . treasure*] The "lovely boy" who monopolises nature's affection must in due course succumb to time's inexorable law of death. The tone of address does not harmonise with the theory that the "fickle boy" and "Nature's *minion*" is identical with the poet's friend of former sonnets. The poem, while subtilised by Ovid's philosophy, is in the vein of many lyrical apostrophes of the boy Cupid. Cf. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnet xvii, where Nature is called Cupid's "pitying grandame."

11-12 *Her audit . . . render thee*] Nature must make a settlement of

# SONNETS

## CXXVII

In the old age black was not counted fair,  
 Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;  
 But now is black beauty's successive heir,  
 And beauty slander'd with a bastard shame:  
 For since each hand hath put on nature's power,  
 Fairing the foul with art's false borrow'd face,  
 Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,  
 But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.  
 Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,  
 Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem

10

her accounts with Time, though it may be delayed, and she will get her acquittance or formal discharge only when she surrenders thee For "quietus" cf. *Hamlet*, III, i, 75.

CXXVII, 1 *In the old age . . . fair*] The praise of a dark complexion is ridiculed in *L. L. L.*, IV, iii, 262 *seq* DUM "To look like her are chimney-sweepers black. LONG. And since her time are colliers counted bright. KING. And Ethiopes of their sweet complexion crack DUM Dark needs no candles now, for dark is light." Similarly at a slightly earlier date in France "the praise of black" was renounced by sonneteers. Cf Jodelle's *Contr' Amours*, Sonnet vii: "Combien de fois mes vers ont-ils doré. *Ces cheveux noirs dignes d'une Meduse* ? Combien de fois *ce teint noir* qui m'amuse, Ay-ie de lis et roses coloré ?" Shakespeare pursues the theme in cxxxi and cxxxii, *infra*

3 *successive heir*] lawful successor.

6 *art's false borrow'd face*] a reference to the disguising art of toilet cosmetics for dyeing hair and colouring the face. Cf lxvii and lxviii, *supra*.

9 *my mistress' eyes*] Thus the Quarto. It seems reasonable to substitute *my mistress's brows*, in order to avoid the repetition of *eyes* in the next line.

10 *suited*] clothed



## SONNETS

At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,  
 Slandering creation with a false esteem:  
     Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,  
     That every tongue says beauty should look so.

### CXXVIII

How oft, when thou, my music, music play'st,  
 Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds  
 With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently sway'st  
 The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,  
 Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap  
 To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,

11-12 *who, not born fair . . . a false esteem*] who not being born fair yet possess every artificial beauty, thereby dishonouring nature by their spurious reputation for beauty.

13 *Yet so they mourn . . . their woe*] "Becoming of their woe" means "adorning or gracing their woe." Cf. cl. 5. For the general sentiment cf. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnet vii, where the beams of a mistress' eyes are "wrapped in colour black," and wear "this mourning weed" so "That whereas black seems beauty's contrary: She even in black doth make all beauties flow" Sidney's "mourning" image is more precisely reproduced throughout cxxxii, *infra*

CXXVIII, 1-9 *How oft, when thou . . . those jacks . . . To be so tickled*] Cf. *Tit Andr.*, II, iv, 46. "And make the silken strings delight to *kiss* them" [*i. e.*, the lady's fingers playing on the lute] See also Ben Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour*, Act III, Scene iii, where Fastidious says of Saviolina playing the "viol de gambo": "You see the subject of her *sweet fingers* there — O she *tickles* it so, that . . . I have wished myself to be that instrument, I think, a thousand times"

5 *those jacks*] like "dancing chips" (line 10) and "saucy jacks" (line 13), the keys of the spinet or virginal, an elementary form of pianoforte.

Cf. *Ram Alley*, 1611 (Dodsley's *Old Plays*, X, 346): "virginal *jacks*."

6 *tender inward*] delicate inside.

## SONNETS

Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,  
 At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand !  
 To be so tickled, they would change their state  
 And situation with those dancing chips, 10  
 O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,  
 Making dead wood more blest than living lips.  
     Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,  
     Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

### CXXIX

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame  
 Is lust in action ; and till action, lust  
 Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,  
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust ;  
 Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight ;  
 Past reason hunted ; and no sooner had,  
 Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait,  
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad :  
 Mad in pursuit, and in possession so ;  
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme ; 10

11-12 *O'er whom . . . living lips*] Cf. Constable's *Miscellaneous Sonnets*,  
 v (ed Hazlitt, p 26) "A lute of *senselesse wood* by nature dumbe  
*Toucht by thy hand doth speake divinely well* "

CXXIX The ravages of lust is a favourite topic with sonneteers Cf  
 Sidney's penultimate sonnet in the appendix to *Astrophel and Stella* :  
 "Thou blind man's mark, thou fool's self chosen snare," and *Emarcu-*  
*dulfe*, sonnets written by E C., 1595, No. xxxvii. "O lust, of sacred  
 love the foule corrupter." See also *Venus and Adonis*, 799-804, and  
*Lucrece*, 687-735.

1 *The expense*] The expenditure or spending

## SONNETS

A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;  
 Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream,  
     All this the world<sup>a</sup> well knows; yet none knows well  
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

### CXXX

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
 Coral is far more red than her lips' red:  
 If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
 If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
 I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,  
 But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
 And in some perfumes is there more delight  
 Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

---

11 *proved, a very woe*] Malone's correction of the Quarto reading *proud and very woe*

cxxx Satiric allusion is made here to the extravagant imagery of contemporary sonnets, notably of those in which the mistress' features were compared to the sun or the stars or precious stones. See *Sonnet* xxi, *supra*. Shakespeare would seem to be ridiculing especially Lodge's *Phyllis* (1593), Sonnet viii: "*No stars her eyes to clear the wandering night, But shining suns of true divinity . . . No coral is her lip, no rose her fair.*"

4 *If hairs be wires*] "Wires" in the sense of hair was distinctive of the sonneteer's affected vocabulary. Cf. Daniel's *Delia* (1591), xxvi: "And golden hairs may change to silver *wire*"; Lodge's *Phyllis* (1593), ix: "Made blush the beauties of her curled *wire*"; Barnes' *Parthenophil*, Sonnet xlviii: "Her hairs no grace of golden *wires* want."

5 *damask'd, red and white*] Cf. *As you like it*, III, v, 122: "mingled damask."

8 *the breath . . . reeks*] Cf. Constable's *Diana*, Decade i, Sonnet ix: "From her sweet breath their [*i. e.*, the flowers] sweet smells do proceed."

## SONNETS

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:  
I grant I never saw a goddess go,  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.

**CXXXI**

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,  
As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;  
For well thou know'st to my dear doting heart  
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel.  
Yet, in good faith, some say that thee behold,  
Thy face hath not the power to make love groan:  
To say they err I dare not be so bold,  
Although I swear it to myself alone.  
And to be sure that is not false I swear,  
A thousand groans, but thinking on thy face,  
One on another's neck, do witness bear  
Thy black is fairest in my judgement's place.

9-10 *I love to hear . . . pleasing sound*] Cf. Constable's *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, No. v: "And from thy lips and breast sweet tunes do come"

11-12 *I grant . . . on the ground*] Cf. Lodge's *Phyllis*, viii: "No Nymph is she but mistress of the air." "Go" means "walk." Cf li, 14

14 *she*] here a substantive. Cf. *Tw. Night*, I, v, 226: "you are the cruell'st *she* alive."

CLXXXI, 1, *so as thou art*] “as” here is an enclitic of emphasis.

11 *One on another's neck*] Cf 1 *Hen.* IV, IV, iii, 92: "in the neck of that," a common phrase. See also *Hamlet*, IV, vii, 164: "*One* woe doth tread *upon another's heel*."

## SONNETS

In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,  
And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds.

### CXXXII

Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,  
Knowing thy heart torments me with disdain,  
Have put on black and loving mourners be,  
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.  
And truly not the morning sun of heaven  
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,  
Nor that full star that ushers in the even  
Doth half that glory to the sober west,  
As those two mourning eyes become thy face:  
O, let it then as well beseem thy heart  
To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee grace,  
And suit thy pity like in every part.  
Then will I swear beauty herself is black,  
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.

10

### CXXXIII

Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan  
For that deep wound it gives my friend and me!

14 *this slander*] the allegation of the inability of the lady's "face" to "make love groan" (line 6, *supra*).

CXXXII, 3 *black and loving mourners be*] See cxxvii, 13, and note.

6 *the grey cheeks of the east*] Cf. *Tit. Andr.*, II, ii, 1 "the morn is bright and grey," and *2 Hen. IV*, II, iii, 18-19: "the sun In the grey vault of heaven."

9 *As those two mourning eyes become thy face*] For the image, cf. *T. of Shrew*, IV, v, 31-32: "What stars do spangle heaven with such beauty, *As those two eyes become thy heavenly face?*"

CXXXIII For the subject-matter of this and the next sonnet (the intrigue of the poet's friend with his mistress), see note on xl, *supra*.

## SONNETS

Is 't not enough to torture me alone,  
 But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be?  
 Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,  
 And my next self thou harder hast engrossed:  
 Of him, myself, and thee, I am forsaken;  
 A torment thrice threefold thus to be crossed.  
 Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward,  
 But then my friend's heart let my poor heart bail;      10  
 Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard;  
 Thou canst not then use rigour in my gaol:  
     And yet thou wilt; for I, being pent in thee,  
     Perforce am thine, and all that is in me.

### CXXXIV

So, now I have confess'd that he is thine  
 And I myself am mortgaged to thy will,  
 Myself I'll forfeit, so that other mine  
 Thou wilt restore, to be my comfort still:

9 *Prison my heart . . . ward*] Cf xxii, 6-7, and cix, 3-4, and note. So

Barnes' *Parthenophil*, xvi: "*mine heart in her body lies imprisoned*"

cxxxiv The legal terminology in this sonnet (cf. lxxxvii, 3-4) again closely resembles that employed by Barnes in his *Parthenophil*, Sonnets viii, ix, and xi, where "mortgage," "bail," "forfeit," "forfeiture," "deed of gift" are all applied to the mistress' hold on the lover's heart. This sort of phraseology, applied to amorous purposes, was well satirised by Sir John Davies in his *Gullinge Sonnets*, of which No. vii opens: "Into the midle temple of my harte"; and No. viii: "My case is this, I love Zepheria bright" (Davies' Works, ed. Grosart, ii, 61-62).

2 *thy will*] printed thus in the Quarto. See lvii, 13, and cxxxv, 1, and note.

3 *other mine*] my "alter ego"

## SONNETS

But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,  
 For thou art covetous and he is kind;  
 He learn'd but surety-like to write for me,  
 Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.  
 The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take,  
 Thou usurer, that put'st forth all to use, 10  
 And sue a friend came debtor for my sake;  
 So him I lose through my unkind abuse.  
     Him have I lost; thou hast both him and me:  
     He pays the whole, and yet am I not free.

### CXXXV

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*,  
 And *Will* to boot, and *Will* in overplus;  
 More than enough am I that vex thee still,  
 To thy sweet will making addition thus.  
 Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,  
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?  
 Shall will in others seem right gracious,  
 And in my will no fair acceptance shine?

7-8 *He learn'd . . . doth bind*] See note on *Merch. of Ven.*, I, ii, 73:

“the Frenchman became his surety and sealed *under* for another.”

9 *The statute of thy beauty*] The statutory security for thy beauty

11 *a friend came*] a friend who became.

12 *my unkind abuse*] the unkind way in which I have been deluded.

cxxxv, 1 *Whoever hath her wish . . . Will*] In this and the next sonnet the word “will” occurs seventeen times, and in nine places it is in the original Quarto italicised and printed with a capital, thus: *Will* (In this regard the typography of the Quarto is followed in the present text.) The capital letter and the italics suggest that a pun on the poet's Christian name is here intended, although *Will*

## SONNETS

The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,  
And in abundance addeth to his store;

10

is so often printed thus in Elizabethan books that the typography gives no sure ground for the deduction. Cf. John Davies' *Summa Totalis* (1607), where in the last twenty-six stanzas the substantive "Will" is used thirty times; it is italicised with the initial capital twelve times, and has the initial capital without the italics sixteen times, such are mere typographical vagaries. Apart from its usage as a proper name the word was especially common in the senses of self-will and lust, as well as in those of wish, caprice, goodwill, deliberate purpose, and testament. Its variety of significations encouraged verbal quibbles, and Shakespeare's plays abound in them, though nowhere does he bring his own Christian name under contribution Cf. *L. L. L.*, II i, 98-99; and *Merch. of Ven.*, I, ii, 21-22, and note; *M. Wives*, III, iv, 58, *Two Gent.*, I, iii, 63, IV, ii, 88-89; *Much Ado*, V, iv, 26. Here the quibbling mainly revolves about the word in the sensual significance of "lust" and its colloquial employment as the poet's Christian name See Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, Appendix viii ("The Will Sonnets") There is small ground for assuming that any reference is anywhere made to a second lover of the lady bearing the poet's own Christian name. In lvii, 13, the substantives "Will," and cxi, 8, the plural form "Wills" are used without quibbling significance

*Whoever . . . Will*] An allusion to the current cant phrase, which was utilised as the name of a popular comedy by William Haughton, c. 1597. "A woman will have her will."

9-10 *The sea, all water . . . to his store*] A favourite reflection of Shakespeare Cf. *3 Hen VI*, V, iv, 8-9:

"With tearful eyes add water to the sea,  
And give more strength to that which hath too much",

*Tw. Night*, I, i, 10-11 (an apostrophe to the spirit of love) "thy capacity . . . receiveth as the sea"; *As you like it*, II, i, 46-49; and *Lover's Compl.*, 39-40



## SONNETS

So thou, being rich in *Will*, add to thy *Will*  
 One will of mine, to make thy large *Will* more.  
 Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;  
 Think all but one, and me in that one *Will*.

### CXXXVI

If thy soul check thee that I come so near,  
 Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy *Will*,  
 And will, thy soul knows, is admitted there;  
 Thus far for love, my love-suit, sweet, fulfil.  
*Will* will fulfil the treasure of thy love,  
 Ay, fill it full with wills, and my will one.  
 In things of great receipt with ease we prove  
 Among a number one is reckon'd none:

11-14 *So thou, being rich . . . one Will*] The lady being rich in *will* (i. e., obduracy and lustfulness) is bidden increase the abundant store by granting the wish or will of her present lover: "Let not my mistress," the poet concludes, "kill in her unkindness any of her fair spoken suitors. Rather let her think all who beseech her favours incorporate in one alone of her lovers — and that one the writer whose name of 'Will' is a synonym for the passions that dominate her."

CXXXVI, 2 *thy blind soul*] Cf. xxvii, 10, *supra*: "The *sightless* view of the soul."

3 *And will . . . is admitted there*] Cf. Sir John Davies' *Nosce Teipsum* (Works, ed. Grosart, ii, p. 79): "*Will* holds the royal sceptre in the soul."

6 *wills*] the varied forms of will, i. e., lusts, stubbornness, etc. The plural form is common. Cf. Barnes' *Parthenophil*: "Mine heart bound martyr to thy *wills*," and cxxxi, 8, *supra*.

8 *one is reckon'd none*] a quibble on the proverbial expression "one is no number," which is twice repeated in Marlowe and Chapman's *Hero and Leander*, Sestiad I, 255 and Sestiad V, 339, and is again quoted in *Rom. and Jul.*, I, ii, 32-33. See note there. Cf. also viii, 14, *supra*.

## SONNETS

Then in the number let me pass untold,  
 Though in thy store's account I one must be; 10  
 For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold  
 That nothing me, a something sweet to thee:  
     Make but my name thy love, and love that still,  
 And then thou lovest me, for my name is *Will*.

### CXXXVII

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes,  
 That they behold, and see not what they see?  
 They know what beauty is, see where it lies,  
 Yet what the best is take the worst to be.  
 If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,  
 Be anchor'd in the bay where all men ride,  
 Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,  
 Whereto the judgement of my heart is tied?  
 Why should my heart think that a several plot  
 Which my heart knows the wide world's common  
     place? 10

---

13-14 *Make but . . . Will*] Make will (*i. e.*, the quality which forms thy being or thyself) thy love, and then thou lovest me, because my name is "Will." The identity between us is complete. The poet's final claim to the lady's favours is that he and her ruling passion go by the same name

CXXXVII A typical example of the vituperative sonnet,—a variety which is extremely common in Ronsard and his French and English disciples. Cf. Jodelle's *Contr' Amours* Cf. cxlvii, 13-14, and cl, *infra* 5-6 *If eyes . . . Be anchor'd*] Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, I, v, 33 (Cleopatra of Pompey her lover): "There would he *anchor* his aspect."

9-10 *several plot . . . common place*] plot of land in private ownership . . . common land. For this legal terminology cf. *L. L. L.*, II, i, 222: "My lips are no *common*, though *several* they be."

## SONNETS

Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not,  
 To put fair truth upon so foul a face?  
     In things right true my heart and eyes have erred.  
     And to this false plague are they now transferred.

### CXXXVIII

When my love swears that she is made of truth,  
 I do believe her, though I know she lies,  
 That she might think me some untutor'd youth,  
 Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.  
 Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,  
 Although she knows my days are past the best,  
 Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:  
 On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.  
 But wherefore says she not she is unjust?  
 And wherefore say not I that I am old?  
 O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,  
 And age in love loves not to have years told:  
     Therefore I lie with her and she with me,  
     And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

10

CXXXVIII This sonnet is the opening poem of *Pass Pilg.*, 1599. Some textual variations are noticed in the reprint of that miscellany.

6 *Although she knows . . . the best*] See note on xxii, 1, *supra*

8-9 *On both sides . . . unjust*] In *Pass. Pilg.* these lines run: "Out-facing faults in Loue, with loues ill rest. But wherefore sayes my Loue that *she is young?*"

11 *O, love's best habit is in seeming trust*] *Pass. Pilg.* reads: "O, Loues best habite is a soothing tounge."

13-14 *Therefore I lie . . . flatter'd be*] *Pass Pilg* reads: "Therefore Ile lye with Loue, and Loue with me, Since that our faults in Loue thus smother'd be."

## SONNETS

### CXXXIX

O, call not me to justify the wrong  
 That thy unkindness lays upon my heart;  
 Wound me not with thine eye, but with thy tongue;  
 Use power with power, and slay me not by art.  
 Tell me thou lovest elsewhere; but in my sight,  
 Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside:  
 What need'st thou wound with cunning, when thy might  
 Is more than my o'er-press'd defence can bide?  
 Let me excuse thee: ah, my love well knows  
 Her pretty looks have been mine enemies;  
 And therefore from my face she turns my foes,  
 That they elsewhere might dart their injuries:  
 Yet do not so; but since I am near slain,  
 Kill me outright with looks, and rid my pain.

10

### CXL

Be wise as thou art cruel; do not press  
 My tongue-tied patience with too much disdain;  
 Lest sorrow lend me words, and words express  
 The manner of my pity-wanting pain.  
 If I might teach thee wit, better it were,  
 Though not to love, yet, love, to tell me so;

CXXXIX, 3 *Wound me not with thine eye*] Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, II, iv, 14:  
 "stabbed with a white wench's black eye"

14 *Kill me outright . . . pain*] Cf. Constable's *Diana*, Decade iv, Sonnet  
 v: "*Do speedy execution with your eye*"; and Sidney's *Astrophel  
 and Stella*, Sonnet xlviii: "Dear killer, spare not thy *sweet cruel shot*,  
 A kind of grace it is to *slay with speed*." "Rid" means "get rid of,"  
 "destroy"

CXL, 6 *to tell me so*] to tell me that thou dost love.

## SONNETS

As testy sick men, when their deaths be near,  
No news but health, from their physicians know;  
For, if I should despair, I should grow mad,  
And in my madness might speak ill of thee: 10 •  
Now this ill-wresting world is grown so bad,  
Mad slanderers by mad ears believed be.

That I may not be so, nor thou belied,  
Bear thine eyes straight, though thy proud heart go  
wide.

### CXLI

In faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes,  
For they in thee a thousand errors note;  
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,  
Who, in despite of view, is pleased to dote;  
Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune delighted;  
Nor tender feeling, to base touches prone,  
Nor taste, nor smell, desire to be invited  
To any sensual feast with thee alone:  
But my five wits nor my five senses can 10  
Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,  
Who leaves unsway'd the likeness of a man,  
Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be:

---

11 *ill-wresting*] misinterpreting maliciously.

14 *Bear thine eyes . . . wide*] Cf. xciii, 4, *supra*: "Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place."

CXLI, 6 *base touches*] sensual indulgence.

9 *five wits*] The wits or intellectual faculties were reckoned of the same number as the "senses." Cf. *Much Ado*, I, i, 55, and note.

11-12 *Who leaves unsway'd . . . wretch to be*] (One foolish heart) which, foregoing its control, makes of a man the mere husk or simulacrum

## SONNETS

Only my plague thus far I count my gain,  
That she that makes me sin awards me pain.

### CXLII

Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,  
Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving:  
O, but with mine compare thou thine own state,  
And thou shalt find it merits not reproving;  
Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,  
That have profaned their scarlet ornaments  
And seal'd false bonds of love as oft as mine,  
Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents.  
Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lovest those  
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee: 10  
Root pity in thy heart, that, when it grows,  
Thy pity may deserve to pitied be.

of a human being, thereby suffering him to become thy proud heart's slave and wretched vassal.

CXLII, 6 *their scarlet ornaments*] Cf. *Edward III*, II, i, 10: "His cheeks put on *their scarlet ornament*" So Constable's *Diana*, Decade iv, Sonnet vi: "Your lips in *scarlet clad*."

7 *seal'd false bonds of love*] Cf. *Merch. of Ven*, II, vi, 6: "To *seal love's bonds*" (i. e., to kiss). So *Venus and Adonis*, 511-516: "sweet *seals* in my soft lips imprinted . . . thy *seal*-manual on my wax-red lips"; and *Meas for Meas*, IV, i, 5-6: "my kisses . . . *Seals of love* but seal'd in vain."

8 *Robb'd others' . . . rents*] Sought intercourse with married men. Cf. Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond* (1592), 755-75C: "And in uncleanness ever have been fed By the revenue of a wanton bed," and *Lucrece*, 1619-1620: "Dear husband, in the interest of thy bed A stranger came."

## SONNETS

If thou dost seek to have what thou dost hide,  
By self-example mayst thou be denied !

### CXLIII

Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch  
One of her feather'd creatures broke away,  
Sets down her babe, and makes all swift dispatch  
In pursuit of the thing she would have stay;  
Whilst her neglected child holds her in chase,  
Cries to catch her whose busy care is bent  
To follow that which flies before her face,  
Not prizing her poor infant's discontent:  
So runn'st thou after that which flies from thee,  
Whilst I thy babe chase thee afar behind;  
But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me,  
And play the mother's part, kiss me, be kind:  
So will I pray that thou mayst have thy *Will*,  
If thou turn back and my loud crying still.

13 *If thou . . . dost hide*] If thou then wouldst have of me that love which thou now hidest away from me, which thou now declinest to give me.

CXLIII, 3 *Sets down her babe*] For the imagery cf. xxii, 11-12, *supra*, where the poet promises to bear and keep his beloved's heart "so chary As tender nurse *her babe* from faring ill."

13 *Will*] This word is italicised with a capital letter in the Quarto, and a pun is commonly detected as in *Sonnets* cxxxv and cxxxvi, *supra*. "Thou mayst have thy *Will*" is a variant on the current catch-phrase "A woman will have her will" already employed, cxxxv, 1, *supra*, and here again seems to be a pun on the poet's Christian name. The moral of the sonnet is somewhat equivocal. The poet presents his mistress as a country housewife, who sets down himself, "her babe," to catch a "feather'd creature" who

# SONNETS

## CXLIV

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,  
Which like two spirits do suggest me still:  
The better angel is a man right fair,  
The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.  
To win me soon to hell, my female evil  
Tempteth my better angel from my side,  
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,  
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.  
And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend  
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;

10

flies out of her poultry-yard. The poet so far from regarding the escaping thing as a serious rival wishes the woman success in the chase on condition that she will then come back and kiss his tears away. There is some suggestion of a "menage à trois"; see xl, *supra*, and note. But doubt is permissible whether the "feather'd creature" could portend real danger to the good relations of the woman and her "babe."

CXLIV This sonnet is the second poem in *Pass. Pulg.* of 1599, with some slight textual variations there noted. For the conflict between the poet's affection for friend and mistress see xl, *supra*, and note, and cf. xlii, xliii, cxxxi, and cxxxiii.

2 suggest] tempt

6 Tempteth . . . from my side] Cf. *Othello*, V, ii, 211: "Yea, curse his better angel from his side," and Drayton's *Idea* (1599), Sonnet xxii:

"An evil spirit, your beauty, haunts me still . . .  
Which ceaseth not to tempt me to each ill, .  
Thus am I still provoked to every evil  
By that good-wicked spirit, sweet angel-devil"

Mark Antony calls Brutus "Cæsar's angel" (*Jul Cæs*, III, ii, 181) side] Thus *Pass. Pulg.* The 1609 Quarto reads wrongly *sight*.

9 And whether . . . fiend] Cf. Jodelle's *Contr' Amours*, Sonnet vi, "Faisant d'un diable un ange."



## SONNETS

But being both from me, both to each friend,  
 I guess one angel in another's hell:  
     Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,  
     Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

### CXLV

Those lips that Love's own hand did make  
 Breathed forth the sound that said "I hate,"  
 To me that languish'd for her sake:  
 But when she saw my woeful state,  
 Straight in her heart did mercy come,  
 Chiding that tongue that ever sweet  
 Was used in giving gentle doom;  
 And taught it thus anew to greet;  
 "I hate" she alter'd with an end,  
 That follow'd it as gentle day  
 Doth follow night, who, like a fiend,  
 From heaven to hell is flown away;  
     "I hate" from hate away she threw,  
     And saved my life, saying "not you."

10

14 *fire . . . out*] The expression which had a literary character in Shakespeare's day is now a vulgarity. So Guilpin's *Skialethera* (1598, ed. Grosart, p. 17): "But Ile be loth (wench) to be *fired out*." See *Lear*, V, iii, 23, and note. Cf *Athenæum*, January 19, 1901.

CXLV This sonnet is in octosyllabics, like Lyly's familiar song "Cupid and my Campaspe played," which is also in fourteen lines but, unlike the present poem, is in couplets. The temper of the two poems is similar.

11-12 *night, who . . . is flown away*] Cf. *Lucrece*, 1081-1082: "*solemn night with slow sad gait descended To ugly hell.*"

13-14 "I hate" . . . "not you"] She deprived the words "I hate" of the

## SONNETS

### CXLVI

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,  
 . . . these rebel powers that thee array.  
 Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,  
 Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?  
 Why so large cost, having so short a lease,  
 Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
 Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,  
 Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?  
 Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,  
 And let that pine to aggravate thy store;  
 Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;  
 Within be fed, without be rich no more:

10

---

tragic consequence of hate by adding the words "not you." A like quibble in which the negative particle "not" is employed to identical purpose is in *Lucrece*, lines 1534-1540

CXLVI, 1-2 *Poor soul . . . array*] There is an obvious corruption here. The Quarto repeats by a typographical error at the beginning of the second line *My sinful earth* from the end of the first line. Malone's suggestion of *Fool'd by those rebel powers*, etc., seems as good as any. "Array" is occasionally found in the sense of "afflict" or "torment," which would suit the context. But the ordinary meaning of "clothe" or "adorn" seems alone consistent with the "costly gay" ornament in which, according to line 4, the powers of sin have invested the soul's external home. Cf. for the relation between the soul and the body *Rom. and Jul.*, II, i, 1-2: "Can I go forward when my heart is here? Turn back, dull earth, and find thy centre out." See also *Merch. of Ven.*, V, i, 64-66. "Such harmony is in immortal souls; But whilst this muddy vesture of decay Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

10 *aggravate*] increase.

11 *Buy terms divine . . . of dross*] Buy long periods of divine salvation  
 [ 137 ]

## SONNETS

So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,  
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

### CXLVII

My love is as a fever, longing still  
For that which longer nurseth the disease;  
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,  
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.  
My reason, the physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,  
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve  
Desire is death, which physic did except.  
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,  
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;  
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,  
At random from the truth vainly express'd;  
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee  
bright,  
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

- 
- by disposing of all hours wasted in sensual indulgence. Cf. Ovid's *Metam.*, xv (Golding's transl., 1612, p. 185 b): "filthy drosse of earth."  
 CXLVII, 5 *My reason, the physician to my love*] Cf. *M. Wives*, II, i, 5:  
 "though Love use Reason for his physician, he admits him not for his counsellor."  
 7-8 *I desperate now . . . did except*] My desperate case proves that love, which took exception to the physic of reason, is death.  
 9 *Past cure . . . past care*] This common proverb is quoted in *L. L. L.*, V, ii, 28.  
 10-11 *And frantic-mad . . . as madmen's are*] Cf. Drayton's *Idea*, 1594, No. xliii: "But still distracted in Love's lunacy, And Bedlam-like thus raving in my grief. Now rail upon her hair," etc.  
 14 *Who art as black as hell . . . night*] Cf. cxxvii, *supra*, and notes.

## SONNETS

### CXLVIII

O me, what eyes hath Love put in my head,  
 Which have no correspondence with true sight!  
 Or, if they have, where is my judgement fled,  
 That censures falsely what they see aright?  
 If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,  
 What means the world to say it is not so?  
 If it be not, then love doth well denote  
 Love's eye is not so true as all men's: no,  
 How can it? O, how can Love's eye be true,  
 That is so vex'd with watching and with tears? 10  
 No marvel then, though I mistake my view;  
 The sun itself sees not till heaven clears.  
 O cunning Love! with tears thou keep'st me blind,  
 Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should find.

### CXLIX

Canst thou, O cruel! say I love thee not,  
 When I against myself with thee partake?  
 Do I not think on thee, when I forgot  
 Am of myself, all tyrant, for thy sake?

CXLVIII, 4 *censures*] judges.

8 *Love's eye . . . no,*] No particular sanctity attaches to this perplexing punctuation of the Quarto. The colon looks like a typographical superfluity and may well take the place of the comma after *no*. A pun on "eye" and "aye," the affirmative particle, seems obviously intended.

CXLIX, 2 *When I . . . partake*] Cf. xlix, 11 and lxxxviii, 3, *supra* "Partake" means "take part." See 1 *Hen. VI*, II, iv, 100. "Your partaker [*i. e.*, partisan] Pole."

3-4 *when I forgot . . . for thy sake*] when I forgot that I have interests of my own, in my zeal for thee, complete tyrant that thou art.

## SONNETS

Who hateth thee that I do call my friend?  
 On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon?  
 Nay, if thou lour'st on me, do I not spend  
 Revenge upon myself with present moan?  
 What merit do I in myself respect,  
 That is so proud thy service to despise,  
 When all my best doth worship thy defect,  
 Commanded by the motion of thine eyes?

10

But, love, hate on, for now I know thy mind;  
 Those that can see thou lovest, and I am blind.

### CL

O, from what power hast thou this powerful might  
 With insufficiency my heart to sway?  
 To make me give the lie to my true sight,  
 And swear that brightness doth not grace the day?  
 Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,  
 That in the very refuse of thy deeds  
 There is such strength and warrantise of skill,  
 That, in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds?

---

*CL* For this vituperative sonnet, cf. cxxxvii, *supra*.

2 *With insufficiency*] By dint of defect.

5 *this becoming of things ill*] this grace of rendering seemingly evil things.

See *Ant. and Cleop.*, I, iii, 96: "my becomings," i. e., things that become me, my graces. At cxxvii, 13: "*becoming of* [i. e., gracing] their woe," a like significance attaches to the verb "become." For the general sentiment cf. xl, 13, *supra*: "Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows"; and xcv, 12; also *Ant. and Cleop.*, II, ii, 242-243: "vilest things *Become* themselves in her."

7 *warrantise*] warranty, warrant.

## SONNETS

Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,  
The more I hear and see just cause of hate? 10  
O, though I love what others do abhor,  
With others thou shouldst not abhor my state:  
If thy unworthiness raised love in me,  
•More worthy I to be beloved of thee.

### CLI

Love is too young to know what conscience is;  
Yet who knows not conscience is born of love?  
Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,  
Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove:  
For, thou betraying me, I do betray  
My nobler part to my gross body's treason;  
My soul doth tell my body that he may  
Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther reason,  
But rising at thy name doth point out thee 10  
As his triumphant prize. Proud of this pride,  
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,  
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.  
No want of conscience hold it that I call  
Her "love" for whose dear love I rise and fall.

### CLII

In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn,  
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing;  
In act thy bed-vow broke, and new faith torn,  
In vowing new hate after new love bearing.

CLI, 3 *my amiss*] my fault; cf. xxxv, 7, *supra*

CLII, 2 *twice forsworn*] The lady has not only played the poet false, but  
her husband as well

## SONNETS

But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee,  
 When I break twenty? I am perjured most;  
 For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee,  
 And all my honest faith in thee is lost:  
 For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep kindness,  
 Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy constancy;  
 And, to enlighten thee, gave eyes to blindness,  
 Or made them swear against the thing they see;  
 For I have sworn thee fair; more perjured I,  
 To swear against the truth so foul a lie!

### CLIII

Cupid laid by his brand and fell asleep:  
 A maid of Dian's this advantage found,  
 And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep  
 In a cold valley-fountain of that ground;  
 Which borrow'd from this holy fire of Love  
 A dateless lively heat, still to endure,

11 *to enlighten thee . . . to blindness*] in order to invest thee with light and beauty, sacrifices my powers of vision. I deliberately shut my eyes, so that I might think thy ugliness beauty.

CLIII This poem, like the one that follows, adapts an epigram in the *Palatine Anthology*, ix, 627, which was translated into Latin in *Selecta Epigrammata*, Basle, 1529. The Greek lines relate how Cupid while asleep gave his torch to the keeping of nymphs, who, thinking to put out its fire, plunged it into the water with the result that it heated the water for all time. The conceit is very common in Renaissance poetry. The poet's attribution of permanent curative properties to the fountain fired by Cupid's torch is a late amplification of the Greek epigram. Cf. Fletcher's *Licia* (1593), xxvii, 11-12: "Now by her [*i. e.*, Love's] means it [*i. e.*, the water] purchased hath that bliss Which all diseases quickly can remove." Cf. cliv, 11-12, *infra*.

6 *dateless*] endless, lasting; cf. xxx, 6

## SONNETS

And grew a seething bath, which yet men prove  
 Against strange maladies a sovereign cure.  
 But at my mistress' eye Love's brand new-fired,  
 The boy for trial needs would touch my breast; 10  
 I, sick withal, the help of bath desired,  
 And thither hied, a sad distemper'd guest,  
     But found no cure: the bath for my help lies  
     Where Cupid got new fire, my mistress' eyes.

### CLIV

The little Love-god lying once asleep  
 Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,  
 Whilst many nymphs that vow'd chaste life to keep  
 Came tripping by; but in her maiden hand  
 The fairest votary took up that fire  
 Which many legions of true hearts had warm'd;  
 And so the general of hot desire  
 Was sleeping by a virgin hand disarm'd.  
 This brand she quenched in a cool well by,  
 Which from Love's fire took heat perpetual, 10  
 Growing a bath and healthful remedy  
 For men diseased; but I, my mistress' thrall,  
     Came there for cure, and this by that I prove,  
     Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.

8 *Against . . . a sovereign cure*] Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 916: 'Gainst  
 venom'd sores the only sovereign plaster"

CLIV, 7 *general*] commander-in-chief.

11-12 *a bath . . . For men diseased*] Cf. clii, 7-8, *supra*.

13 *this by that I prove*] I draw from such facts as I have given the  
 following conclusion













